Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-SIX • NUMBER SIX • DECEMBER 1988

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Books in Review

Fernanda Eberstadt/Anita Susan Grossman/
Harvey Klehr/David Klinghoffer/Chester E. Finn, Jr.

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Managing Editor: Marion Magid

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Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.50, $36 a year; 2 years $68, 3 years $99—Add $7.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

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EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

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Letters from Readers

Campus Racism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas Short's article, "A 'New Racism' on Campus?" [August], contributes much-needed clarification to the discussion of campus racism. I am a student at the University of Vermont (UVM) where, as Mr. Short mentions, the administrative offices of the school were occupied by minority students. . . . Perhaps more disturbing than the actual results of this sit-in were the reactions to it by the mostly white student body.

First, most UVM students did not even know that the administrative offices had been occupied. At most, one heard such remarks as, "I was down at the Waterman building and there were a bunch of people standing outside having some kind of protest, Central America or racism or something." Of the nearly 10,000 students at UVM, fewer than 200 were involved in the general protest, and only about twenty were actually occupying the administrative offices. Two students, myself included, staged an insignificant counterprotest. Most college political events have similar demographics. . . .

Second, after realizing that the student body was largely ignorant of the issue, many professors decided to devote a period or two of class time to discuss racism. During the three discussions I attended, I was only mildly surprised to learn that most students were not aware that there was any racism on campus. However, the professors told us that the reason for our lack of awareness was that racism was deeply woven into the webs of our own psyches. When I asked one of the professors if he, then, was a racist, he explained that it was not possible for him to tell, owing to the complexities of human nature.

Third, professors and students sympathetic to, but not directly involved in, the protest were unable to answer simple questions about it. They did not know what had prompted it, what the protesters' demands were, or even which minority groups were represented (Jews were a minority, one explained, but not an oppressed one). More difficult questions such as "What is racism?" and "What do you mean by an end to racism?" drew blank stares.

If the majority of college students knew what was going on at their own schools, these protests would draw much more opposition. But until that happens, the only effective counterprotest will occur after the fact, in magazines read by very few college students.

STEVEN SHAW
University of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Viewed objectively, the majority of "racial" incidents at our universities have come from minority students. . . . I am associated with UCLA where, with periodic frequency, a coalition of minority students will violate the laws, as well as the rights, of other students. For example, last spring a mob of minority students, led by a minority-group student politician, was responsible for an assault on students voting for university offices. The mob tore down voting booths and intimidated student voters. This is the sort of action which, if it had been carried out by white students, would no doubt have led to a nationwide liberal protest. And this is only the most recent in a chain of such incidents. On numerous occasions minority activist groups have also occupied the offices of the student newspaper. . . .

A few months ago there was a PBS documentary, *Racism 101*, which spread the myth that racism was rampant on American college campuses. Yet the only examples it could give were a number of incidents in which white students exercised their rights of free speech and free expression, publishing newspapers, distributing leaflets, putting on plays. . . .

It is also interesting that this television program never once condemned the illegal activities of minority students, despite the fact that they were shown occupying university offices, blocking access to classrooms, and harassing students who were trying to go to class. . . .

JOSEPH MIRANDA
North Hollywood, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Thomas Short's article, I am greatly concerned about what may be the next "civil-rights" cause. Last spring, on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a chorus of com-

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plaints began to be heard that the graduation rate for black students was lower than the rate for whites. This was attributed to discrimination and racism. The university authorities were called upon to "do something" to remedy this situation.

I fear that this will become a major issue during the current academic year, and that there will be pressures on departments (and thus on the faculty) to avoid giving low grades to black students. I would not oppose the provision of special coaching facilities for any student who wants to learn and is having difficulty, as is often done for athletes. I would, however, vehemently oppose any move to institute "affirmative-action grading" designed to increase the graduation rate of any particular group. . . .

J. Edgar Williams
Carrboro, North Carolina

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thomas Short's entirely justified indictment of black studies, as conducted at present in many universities, should extend itself also to Jewish studies. That field as well exhibits the traits of special pleading, ethnic celebration, and politicization. Since the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has just now received a complaint from a Gentile denied an appointment in a department of religion for the study of Judaism on the sole grounds that he is not Jewish, the picture is clear. What has happened is the self-ghettoization of Jewish studies outside of the disciplinary framework of academic learning; at some of the leading universities, non-Jews have happily collaborated in excluding Judaic learning from the mainstream of academic concern. . . .

Within the ghetto walls, people do not have to meet the same standards of excellence that apply outside; the walls not only exclude, they also protect. And that accounts for the dreadful condition of black studies and the scarcely different characteristics of Jewish or Judaic studies.

We live in an age in which the old humanities are joined by new ones; women's studies (in their humanistic mode), black studies, Jewish studies, and a broad variety of other subjects enter the curriculum. The universities require them, because we now know that the humanities encompass a world beyond the European, and religions in addition to the Christian religion, for instance. But how are we to make into our own (and academic) what appears at first encounter to be alien and incomprehensible?

As Mr. Short's article correctly shows, one solution accepts as special and particular the new humanities, treating as general and normal the old ones. Hence—in the settlement accepted by some—blacks celebrate blackness and exercise thought-control over blacks; Jews teach Jewish things to Jews, and form a segregated intellectual community within the larger academic world.

But I think this subject matter is too urgent and important—and altogether too interesting—to be left to the self-serving proprietors, or to be permitted to be segregated. To deprive interested colleagues and students of access to the rich human experience and expression contained within the cultural artifacts of hitherto excluded parts of humanity diminishes the academic program and misrepresents the condition of humanity. For black, women's, and Judaic studies among the new humanities, we have therefore to insist that the ghetto walls, once down, may not be reconstructed in the community of intellect.

Jacob Neusner
Program in Judaic Studies
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Some would define the "new racism" on campus as the opposition mounted under the Reagan administration to the affirmative-action gains of the civil-rights movement of the 60's. For Thomas Short, however, the "real" new racism is the attempt by "radicals of the 60's, many of whom now dominate the liberal-arts faculties of our colleges and universities," to use minorities and their concerns for equal access "as a weapon . . . to change the mainstream" of America.

According to Mr. Short, the real problem giving rise to racial unrest on our . . . campuses today is a reversal of what it was in the 60's. The academic protest movement of the 60's (which gave rise in the late 60's and 70's to the development of special hiring practices and academic programs such as ethnic studies . . .) was a movement for *inclusion* in the system; racial unrest in the 80's, however, results, in his view, from the fact that minorities do not want to be treated the same way as others, but desire preferential treatment, separate programs, and separate facilities. Thus, for Mr. Short, the medicine has become worse than the disease.

What he . . . and many others fail to realize is that our society has changed from an industrial society concerned with nationalism and uniformity to an information society concerned with internationalism and diversity. Despite this change, our educational system is still pushing the outmoded, assembly-line model of uniformity. . . . One example is the current "English-only" movement in education, which is actually a nostalgic throwback to a bygone age and irrelevant to the needs of . . . an international world view.

A new age demands new methods and new structures, for the ferment of change cannot be contained in the old structures, lest they burst. . . . The problem with liberals is that they desire to bring about change without necessarily changing the old structures. The result is a lot of fine rhetoric, but slow change, because the concern is with reformation and not revolution.

Mr. Short raises an interesting question in his article: "Why is it that racial tension is at its height precisely in those institutions in which [plans and policies to combat racism] have been most extensively adopted?" The answer is, for the same reason that raised expectations give rise to revolutions—shattered hopes owing to the slow process by which the old structures respond to change.

The purpose of multicultural education and programs of cultural diversity in our colleges and universities is not merely to serve the needs of minority students, . . . but to serve the needs of the *entire* academic institution, and enable all students, especially the white majority, to . . . understand the multicultural nature of our national and world societies, in order not only to compete effectively, but to develop the quality of *compassion*—a rare commodity indeed in our greed-oriented society. . . .

Mr. Short places the cause of white hostility toward blacks on the shoulders of blacks by attributing it to the "preferential treatment of blacks and to the conditions of racial separation that exist on campus"—the old "blaming the vic-

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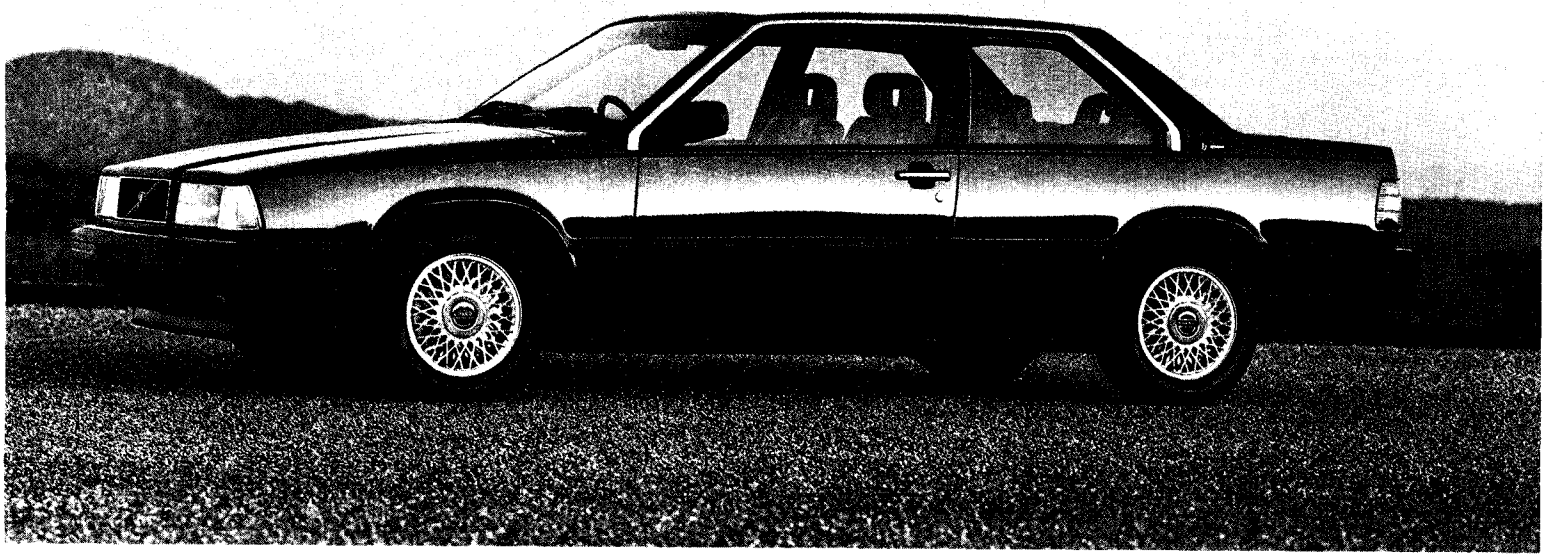

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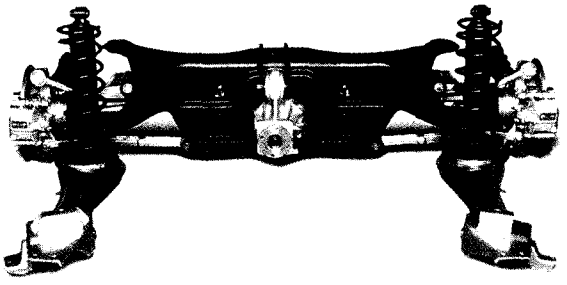

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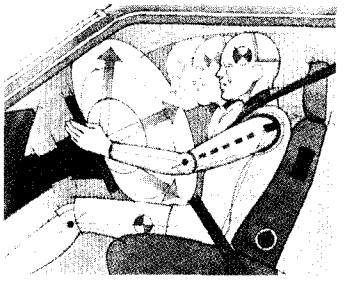

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tim" syndrome. But such thinking suggests that blacks have a price to pay for achieving their gains. Yes, it is true that social interaction on college campuses is largely segregated, and minority groups prefer it that way as a means of socio-psychological support in what is often a hostile environment.

But the cause of racial unrest is not due to minority gains or tactics of survival, but to structures of exclusiveness that while opening some doors keep others sealed shut. Racial unrest is on the increase on our college and university campuses because of: (1) increased expectations for rapid action on promised changes; (2) increased minority-student enrollment; and (3) the lack of an integrated academic-social environment. Minority students must not only be included in the development of special programs and structures, but their concerns and contributions must be integrated into the general curriculum for everyone. They must also be included in the fabric of the social life of the institution, and not just as cosmetic commodities and statistics for state and national affirmative-action reports. . . . We need to prepare all students for the real world, which is one of ethnic and cultural diversity. Of all the nations in the world today, the United States ought to be leading the parade down Main Street in our global-village world society with a new model of multicultural education based on unity in diversity. . . .

A fourth cause of racial unrest is the absence of minority role models and the need for a strong support system for minority students. In other words, there are too few minority faculty, not just to serve as role models for minority students but as educational support and role models for *all* students.

In truth, the new racism is not a reversal of old demands, but results from the refusal by the majority to learn from the minority, in the same way the latter learned from the former. . . .

Yes, the goal is "to change the mainstream," as Mr. Short fears, for the ferment of the new wine of cultural diversity in a multicultural, heterogeneous world society will burst the old structures of exclusiveness along with their homogeneous models of education. . . .

CALEB ROSADO
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

THOMAS SHORT writes:

My thanks to Steven Shaw, Joseph Miranda, J. Edgar Williams, and Jacob Neusner for their supporting testimony. My thanks also to Caleb Rosado for making the political motive of "multicultural education" plain. Its aim, he cheerfully admits, is "to change the mainstream" of American society, and he wants us to understand that this change is to be revolutionary.

Of course, few proponents of "multicultural education" imbibe Mr. Rosado's particular concoction. But putting his talk of the global-village information society aside, the rest is standard. The critique of American society as racist and "greed-oriented" is standard; the critique of higher education as enforcing an "assembly-line . . . uniformity," and as excluding minorities, is standard; and so is the idea that higher education can and should be used to create a new society tolerant of "ethnic and cultural diversity."

Like so many others safe in the cozy nests of higher education, Mr. Rosado espouses revolution without reckoning its costs. The excitement generated by the prospect of turning academic study into a political movement blinds these enthusiasts to at least three obvious problems.

First, there is the problem of their anti-democratic arrogance. In the name of equality and democracy, this self-appointed elite, convinced that the professorial class knows best, would use the classroom, not Congress, to change America. Yes, of course the university is the place to discuss revolutionary ideas, some of which may point the path we are to take. But that is something quite different from organizing the curriculum to accomplish a particular, previously specified, revolution.

Second, the claims about the existing curriculum are patently ridiculous. A curriculum that includes Marx as well as Locke, Plato as well as Jefferson, St. Thomas and Nietzsche, Jane Austen and the *Upanishads* (not a rock group), the epistles of St. Paul and the analects of Confucius, not to mention vast bodies of knowledge, scientific, historical, and linguistic, and the *unpoliticized* study of other civilizations and cultures (which has long been a part of university curricula), cannot fairly be called "homogeneous." What educated person could ever have thought such a thing? Furthermore, immersion in this body of objective knowledge and diverse philosophies is precisely what has been liberating to peoples around the globe over many centuries. Such a curriculum excludes no intelligent person, black, female, homosexual, or Hispanic, no matter how often professors tell their students otherwise.

Third, the new, ideologically determined pluralism, rather than introducing diversity, trivializes it. The great choices an educated and free person must make are reduced to the level of choice among items on a menu: everything is equally good, only different. You would not know from Mr. Rosado's or many similar discussions that in his "global village," just on the other side of Main Street, are Communist China and the Soviet empire and their client tyrannies in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. By this rationale for "multicultural education," it must seem that totalitarian regimes are no more than a reflection of those cultural differences we should all learn to tolerate. Try telling that to the subjugated peoples whose traditional religious practices, family life, customs, and economies have been obliterated by imposed governments they are free neither to change nor to leave.

The tragedy is that the falsehoods incorporated in "multicultural education" will not be told to those who could expose them, but to the underprepared matriculants of American colleges, who do not know enough to raise the right questions. Steven Shaw is an exception whose letter attests to the rule.

It may seem that we have strayed far from the topic of campus racism, but we have not. For it has been my thesis, now illustrated by Mr. Rosado's letter, that the hoopla over racism is being generated by those who are using it to promote a further politicization of higher education. Predictably, Mr. Rosado charges that I have "blam[ed] the victim." However, it is not minority students whom I blame. I agree that certain minorities have been and are continuing to be victimized. But the form of victimization is changing and the blame must now be shifted from redneck whites to left-wing professors. By convincing minority students that they are excluded from the traditional curriculum, these professors do in fact exclude them from an education that enlightens and liberates.

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Soviet Anti-Semitism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was greatly impressed by Vladimir Morozov's vivid and eloquent reportage on the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union, "Jews, Jews Everywhere" [May]. But precisely because Mr. Morozov reports his personal experience, I thought there was some danger that the article could indirectly reinforce misconceptions about Soviet anti-Semitism that are widespread, even among those who protest it, and which tend to turn it into something more familiar and tractable.

Mr. Morozov's article affords an opportunity to review the features of Soviet anti-Semitism that are unfamiliar in the West.

There is now widespread awareness of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, but that awareness tends to be shaped by three assumptions that are often not articulated but also not explicitly questioned. First, it is often assumed that Soviet anti-Semitism is social anti-Semitism, the effect of something in Russian society and history. Second, there is often a vague feeling that anti-Semitism in the USSR is part of a vanishing heritage, even if the government is culpable in not doing anything to eliminate that heritage. Third, Soviet anti-Semitism is seen as something negative, i.e., as a failure to give Jews their rights, to admit them to universities or give them jobs, and so forth.

All of these assumptions are wrong. First, Soviet anti-Semitism is a matter not only of social prejudice but of *government policy*. No one should minimize the wide and deep traditional dislike of Jews among many Russians and Ukrainians which Mr. Morozov eloquently portrays. But decisions to exclude Jews from certain professions (the army, the secret police, the party apparatus) or to establish an organization like the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Society are *policy decisions*, like how many missiles to deploy. They are made at a high political level, surely in some cases by the Politburo itself. It is interesting that Mr. Morozov chronicles many crude assertions of prejudice against Jews, but the concrete decisions not to hire Jews, or to fire them, were made at the higher bureaucratic levels. This is a more shocking reality than prejudice which a government weakly tolerates.

The second assumption, that anti-Semitism is a part of a vanishing heritage, is also wrong. Anti-Semitism was rooted in Russian history, but not to the degree that it was in some other countries—Spain and Portugal, for example. Anti-Semitism was part of Russian peasant culture, but so were other attitudes (prejudice against Muslims, against city people) whose public expression has been greatly reduced since 1917. But I wonder whether . . . anti-Semitism is not more widespread and legitimate among groups of intellectuals today than it was in 1917. I suspect that there were more Jewish officers in the army of Holy Russia in February 1917 than there are in the Soviet Army in 1988. If this is true, it is certainly strange.

In fact, the *present* phenomenon of anti-Semitism in the USSR can be dated with precision: it happened in 1946, the year when Zhdanov's campaign against "cosmopolitanism" began. That this happened just after the German capitulation is "no accident," as the Soviet expression has it. Anti-Semitism was the core element, and perhaps the only clear element, in the jumbled Nazi ideology. It was adopted just after Hitler had used it—in a way which must, astonishingly, have struck Zhdanov and Stalin as successful. The Soviet Union is the only great state in history to finish a decisive victory over its greatest enemy by incorporating the core of the enemy's political program into its own politics.

To this day the term used in Soviet political discourse to discuss Jewish issues is "Zionism," a usage that first appeared in the Soviet press in November 1952, as part of the preparation for the Doctors' Plot. The exclusion of Jews from certain careers, and especially from political life, that endures today is a pattern set in the years 1946-53. That this *new* type of anti-Semitism has endured while other elements of Stalinism have been dismantled is a testimony to its distinctiveness, and in some elusive way to its importance.

The third assumption, that Soviet anti-Semitism is a matter of neglect, is also wrong. It is an active policy that prevents in many cases what would otherwise take place in Soviet society. Mr. Morozov points out that Jews are not hired even though their bosses and organizations need them. In fact, Soviet society is highly achievement-oriented (much more in industry and agriculture than in journalism). It is hard for officials to succeed and there are substantial risks for failing. In many Soviet organizations, . . . able Jewish professionals would be a godsend to the harried boss—but they are not promoted or not hired at all.

It is different for many other Soviet nationalities, which are protected by political patrons. In Kazakhstan, for example, Kazakhs were a resource for Kunayev, the First Secretary, because they suffered discrimination, because they needed him and he needed them. Khrushchev was not a Ukrainian, but he protected Ukrainians from discrimination for the same reason. Soviet Jews need this patronage most, and you might think that they could repay it most powerfully. But (since the fall of Beria in 1953) they have not gotten it. Once again this points up the distinctiveness of the Jewish situation in the USSR and how it is not just an outcome of society but of government policy which interrupts some tendencies otherwise natural to the society.

Soviet anti-Semitism is not neglect. It does not only look the other way (though it does this sometimes), it actively makes regulations that enforce the subordination of Jews. The Soviet government differs from old-fashioned anti-Semitic governments in that it also corrupts the society further by actively using parts of the media and the propaganda apparatus to stigmatize Jews. Finally, of course, the Soviet state has encouraged anti-Semitism in Third World countries where there are no Jews and where it has no "social" or "historical" roots whatever.

Under Gorbachev there have been important symbolic changes in the situation of Soviet Jews. To know whether these symbolic changes will be translated into real changes, we must understand the nature of the problem.

CHARLES H. FAIRBANKS, JR.
Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute
Washington, D.C.

Women's Lib

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse's article, "Living With Women's Lib" [August], is provocative and powerful. But Mrs. Wisse's argument betrays two seri-

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Commentary. The Thoughts That Count.

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ous flaws. First, she contends that Betty Friedan and later feminists, in "blaming" some strange conspiracy for middle-class women's ennui, view women as victims of men, and therefore shortchange them. "Why should . . . the *choices* of women be attributed to something beyond themselves?" she asks. Later, however, she concludes that one of the effects of twenty or so years of the women's movement is that today's young women do, indeed, view themselves as victims of a male-dominated society—to the extent that young marrieds now talk of themselves in terms of power struggle, sometimes even in the jargon of Marxist-feminism. Does Mrs. Wisse believe that young women of her day could think for themselves, but young women of today cannot?

Second, Mrs. Wisse's exploration of feminism through the story of her friend "Farla," while immediate and compelling, is also disturbing. Farla is portrayed as being misguided about men: "She had a critical vigor that made her seem even smarter than she was. . . . She seemed, however, very stupid about boys." By linking Farla's problems in the sexual/romantic arena with her later embrace of feminist ideology, Mrs. Wisse is playing on that old, stale, and sad formula that says feminists are man-haters. Or—to take it a step farther—women's political or social theories emanate from their sexual roles. Not that there aren't Farlas out there—people whose beliefs somehow soothe their psychological conflicts—but surely it is a mistake to suggest that the women's movement as a whole is an expression of mass female neurosis.

One of the several absurdities revolving around and spinning out of feminism is that it has so quickly lost its power as a mass movement and dissolved into a subject to be debated in the pages of intellectual magazines and on the podiums of academia. As Mrs. Wisse points out, feminism originally was, and continues to be, the province of the middle class. As such, it has provided seemingly boundless territory for disputes . . . that ultimately benefit few. I do not mean that these arguments should be stifled. Indeed, they have their place; yet by and large they are the fruitless and solipsistic debates of the privileged.

I have no quarrel with Mrs. Wisse's outrage over the insidious suppression of certain so-called sexist words or ideas within the university. Freedom of thought—the freedom *not* to espouse "politically correct" views—must be defended in the university and in the world at large.

Finally, I want to point out that—feminism aside—the great majority of women (and men) work because they need the money. This being the case, it seems self-evident to me that women, on both ends of the economic spectrum, should have a fair shot at the workplace. Whether or not the women's movement deserves credit for helping fight discrimination based on sex, deserves blame for upsetting the fragile balance of family life, or deserves mixed reviews, I frankly do not know. But I do know that in a meritocracy, a smart, hard-working female lawyer should be made partner before a not-so-smart and lazy male one, and an efficient and well-trained telephone repair*man* should be promoted over a sloppy and poorly-trained repair*woman*. Perhaps when all the smoke has cleared on both "sides" of the "woman question," everyone will agree that discrimination on the Right or on the Left can help no one other than a handful of clever writers and editors.

JENNIFER MOSES
McLean, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When I was a young wife and first-time mother at eighteen, I used to feel sorry for my student husband, and then—two more children and a college degree later—wage-earner. What job could he possibly have, I wondered, which would be as important as my own? . . . And as my children got older, I was able to pursue a variety of activities and interests and, even without an *au pair* girl, juggle both domestic and extra-domestic pursuits happily and with a sense of exhilaration. . . .

During five years of consciousness-raising sessions, I was introduced to women who, like me, were excited about the issues which women's lib raised. Yet even as we commiserated over the inequities in both our own and other women's lives, we retained our own personal sense of the good fortune which allowed us such a forum and an equal appreciation of those who did not share our situation.

If, like Mrs. Wisse, a woman is lucky enough to marry and stay married to a man whom she loves and who loves and values her, if fortune gives her healthy children who do not demand a lifetime of care, if she is smart and aggressive and motivated and successful in her extra-domestic pursuits, if economic circumstances do not demand that she remain in a stultifying job—then, yes, even then, she is compelled to navigate a system which, to this day, pays women sixty cents to every dollar that men earn in the marketplace, applies sexual double standards, provides inferior child-care services, and relegates women to continued patronizing medical services; the list goes on. But to such a woman such things are tolerable, if not acceptable. Not so for the vast majority of women who, daily, must abide by or confront the inequities, biases, and sexist attitudes which continue to exist.

And if, as Mrs. Wisse says, "the dissatisfaction that [Betty Friedan] ascribed to women's confinement in the female role was actually the result of their liberation from that role," and they have been suffering from what Erich Fromm called the "escape from freedom" syndrome, is that not a real problem, too? Or are philosophical anxieties also to be precluded from a woman's domain?

It is significant that Mrs. Wisse omitted the birth-control pill from her discussion. When, in 1960, women had for the first time absolute control over their biological destinies, the entire course of men/women relationships was changed irrevocably. From that moment on, women could choose *not* to have children and so to elect a path which had previously been almost the sole prerogative of men. . . .

At this point, our society is not in such great shape. Few people stay married. The family unit is threatened by divorce, by two working parents who leave their children in surrogate care (much of which is comprised of underpaid workers), by women who try to pursue both career and parenthood only to find that they are still doing 90 percent of the domestic work, etc. Is this the result of women's lib or is it, rather, the result of male resistance to the changes which have taken place?

Mrs. Wisse attributes her own and her generation's equilibrium in balancing motherhood with career to their certainty "about the relative significance of these 'roles,' both in our own lives and in the

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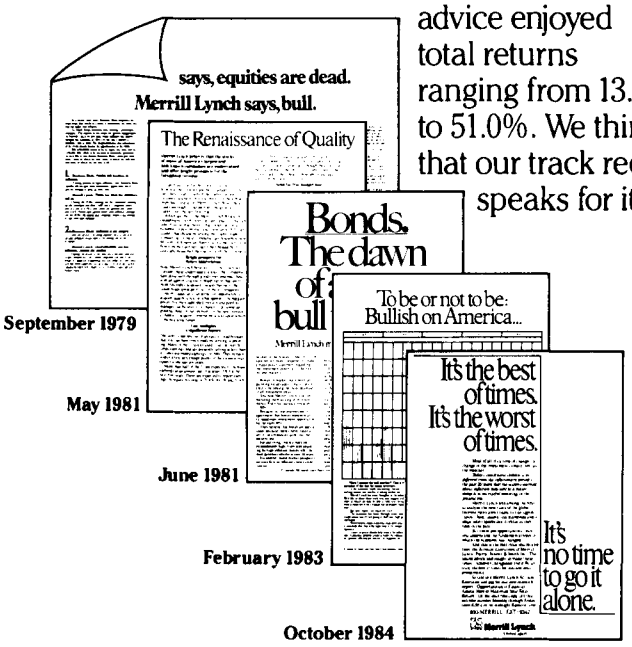

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social fabric, the absolute primacy of the first, the incidental importance of the second." While I agree that this sense of values is not as pervasive today, it still remains true that most women—at least the ones I know—place raising a child above their salary raises or titles. It's too bad that their employers, their husbands, and the government which enacts—or fails to enact—child-care legislation, don't share these values.

JOAN SWIRSKY
Great Neck, New York

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

My article suggested that by misdiagnosing the anxieties of modern women, the movement that pretends to speak for them has in significant ways made their lives more difficult and more troubled. People think for themselves no less today than yesterday; they are as affected as they ever were by poor ideas. The promoters of poor ideas have a lot invested in keeping them afloat. Attempts to expose their poverty are not the "fruitless and solipsistic debates of the privileged" but the plain obligation of citizens.

Jennifer Moses says she frankly does not know whether the women's movement deserves credit, blame, or mixed reviews. But if she favors a meritocracy, she does know. The women's movement favors "strong" affirmative action, designating over half the population as a disadvantaged group entitled to compensation for past discrimination. A society must choose between these competing ideas: if it treats women as victims, it cannot pretend to be judging them as equals.

Joan Swirsky appears similarly reluctant to confirm the choices she has made. There is no other reward than a family for having raised one. Perhaps if women *were* to insist that their priority is raising a new and better generation, then males, husbands, employers, and governments could try to facilitate their task. As it stands, the emphasis of the women's movement—in its "first" phase—on everything but the family has given America a message as mixed as the one in this letter.

Since my article also brought me exceptionally moving and thoughtful letters, not for publication, I would like to express my thanks to those correspondents as well.

The ANC

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, "The ANC in Its Own Words" [July], David Roberts, Jr. begins by attributing to me the view that "neither the deep antagonism" of the African National Congress to the United States nor the assistance it receives from the Soviet Union "results in a pro-Soviet attitude on international issues." This may be a naive judgment, but it is not mine. The passage in my article in *Foreign Affairs* which Mr. Roberts quotes refers to the results of a survey of black South African attitudes, not to my judgment of the attitude of the ANC.

Of course, if one must categorize the ANC as either "pro-Soviet" or "anti-Soviet," it would be "pro-Soviet." But this is a crude characterization. It imputes unthinking motives to a national movement whose pragmatic search for international support is as wide-ranging as its non-doctrinaire search for white and black allies within South Africa. Mr. Roberts does not say that the ANC might also be labeled "pro-Western" since it seeks and receives support from Western governments and organizations, including "anti-Soviet" organizations such as the Socialist International.

Mr. Roberts is said to be "a longtime student of South African affairs," but I have wondered whether to take his article seriously. He has strung together selected quotations of some major leaders that display familiar anti-imperialist rhetoric, some overblown praise of the Soviet Union, and appreciation for the comradeship of South African Communist allies. He discerns in all this "a deeply rooted world view" that—in words I am still puzzling over—has "no logical dependence on the injustices of South Africa's peculiar institution" or Western policy toward South Africa. The upshot is that he has persuaded himself that "the current ANC leadership—all [*sic*] of it—has accepted the terminology, definitions, political program, tactics, and the entire load of ideological baggage that make up the essence of Leninism."

In selecting other quotations, Mr. Roberts apparently believes that any statement by an ANC member or, for that matter, in the ANC's magazine *Sechaba* or on Ra-

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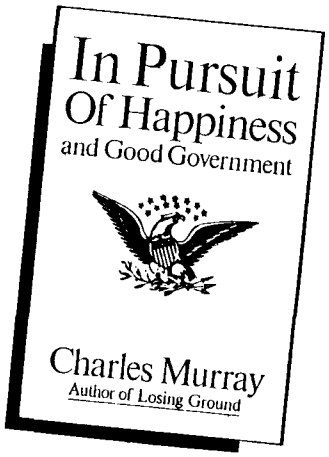

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dio Freedom is necessarily ANC policy. He quotes Winnie Mandela, for example, erroneously assuming that she speaks for the ANC. Most prominently, he quotes a paean to Communism written by Nelson Mandela over twenty-five years ago but does not say that Mandela repudiated it. Nor does he quote Mandela's well-known admiration for American and British political and legal institutions.

In Mr. Roberts's analysis there are no doubts or imponderables. The COMMENTARY reader who read the *Wall Street Journal* of April 18 and 22, 1988 on the ANC would have difficulty recognizing the same movement. Nor is there any recognition of the serious discussion within the ANC in support of an entrenched bill of rights for individuals, including the right to strike, an independent judiciary, a multiparty system, and a mixed economy. One can only speculate about the possibility that this will come to pass. But Mr. Roberts ignores all evidence of such aims. "The notion of limiting government power," he says, " . . . is utterly foreign to the ANC."

The distorted picture of the ANC is due as much to the failure to address relevant questions as it is to simplistic notions about the ANC's internal political dynamics inferred from quotations. What accounts for the ANC's popularity? Why do some pro-government journalists and intellectuals accept the necessity of negotiating some day with the ANC? Why has the ANC in recent decades been restrained in the use of violence? Why did it apparently condone "necklacing" for a period while not encouraging it? What circumstances currently affect differing tendencies in the ANC's thinking about violence?

What conclusions and inferences for policy can be drawn from Roberts's analysis? He implies that the ANC should be excluded from any role in South Africa's future because "its totalitarian character" makes it irredeemable. It is difficult to reconcile this perception with ANC admiration for the responsiveness of American policy to democratic pressures. For example, Thabo Mbeki, the ANC director of information, has written: "We rely on the voters to whom even such people as President Reagan owe their positions to ensure that the West participates in bringing about a democratic South Africa."

Mr. Roberts seems to suggest that the United States should identify itself with "pro-Western black South African democrats, such as Buthelezi and Bishop Isaac Mokoena." The former is of limited and declining appeal even among Zulus, and the latter is a popular object of derision and rejection.

More perplexing is Mr. Roberts's claim that the ANC has an attitude of "contempt and hatred . . . for every political current in South Africa aside from itself, the SACP, and their affiliated [?] organizations." He ignores the effort to reach out widely to whites as well as blacks and the common cause the ANC has made with organizations that do not accept its Freedom Charter. Nor does he note the phenomenon of ANC leaders meeting with a broad array of South Africans, including businessmen and Afrikaans-speaking churchmen. The ANC's welcoming embrace has extended to representatives of the ruling party in the KaNgwane "homeland."

Mr. Roberts's underlying assumption is a straw man: that the ANC can be judged alone, apart from the United Democratic Front, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and other independent elements of the extraparliamentary opposition that either recognize the ANC as the head of the national-liberation movement or accept alignment with it in the interest of unity. This underlying assumption is the major unreality of an analysis that is grossly deficient in dealing with a pragmatic movement that embodies historical aspirations for democracy and is fluid and evolving.

THOMAS G. KARIS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although the article by David Roberts, Jr. is an important contribution to public understanding of the African National Congress, I am perplexed by his contention that "in no intelligible sense is the ANC a front" for the South African Communist party (SACP).

In the appendix she contributed to the late Dr. Roberta Goren's book, *The Soviet Union and Terrorism* (published in 1984), Jillian Becker wrote: "Today, the ANC has been so thoroughly infiltrated and taken over by the SACP that the two are virtually synonymous." The title of this appendix is "How the ANC Became a Communist Front."

The term "Communist front" can be reasonably and intelligibly applied to any organization that does not admit to being Communist but serves Communist purposes under effective Communist control. Good evidence that the ANC serves Communist purposes can be found both in its statements (some of which Mr. Roberts cites) and in the SACP's recognition of the ANC as a close ally. As for the Communists' effective control, Mr. Roberts himself suggests that they may hold as many as 19 out of the 30 seats on the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC). . . .

Indeed, given the sympathy for Communist views among the ANC's technically non-Communist officials (a category that apparently includes the ANC's president, Oliver Tambo), the SACP could probably exercise adequately effective control with less than a clear majority of the NEC acting under direct party orders. Thus it is disquieting that even Tom Lodge—an anti-government South African scholar who judges the ANC leniently—admitted in *South Africa International* (October 1985) that "about half" the NEC consisted of SACP personnel. . . .

But there is reason to fear that Communist control extends far beyond the NEC. In *World Marxist Review* (December 1982), the late Yusuf Dadoo, then chairman of the SACP, boasted about the "many" Communists occupying "leading posts in various sectors of the national-liberation movement." He referred in particular to the "many" Communists in the "combat units" of the ANC's military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), "including their commanders."

In a book somewhat oddly entitled *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (published in 1984), the anti-apartheid radical Breyten Breytenbach wrote: "I have since many years given my allegiance and support to the African National Congress, . . . an organization working in alliance with several others, and in fact the pacesetter of these organizations is the South African Communist party. The SACP actually has the nerve centers of the liberation movement in its control. . . . The SACP has in its hands the secretariat of the ANC, the financial structure of the ANC, the control over the armed wing of the ANC which is called

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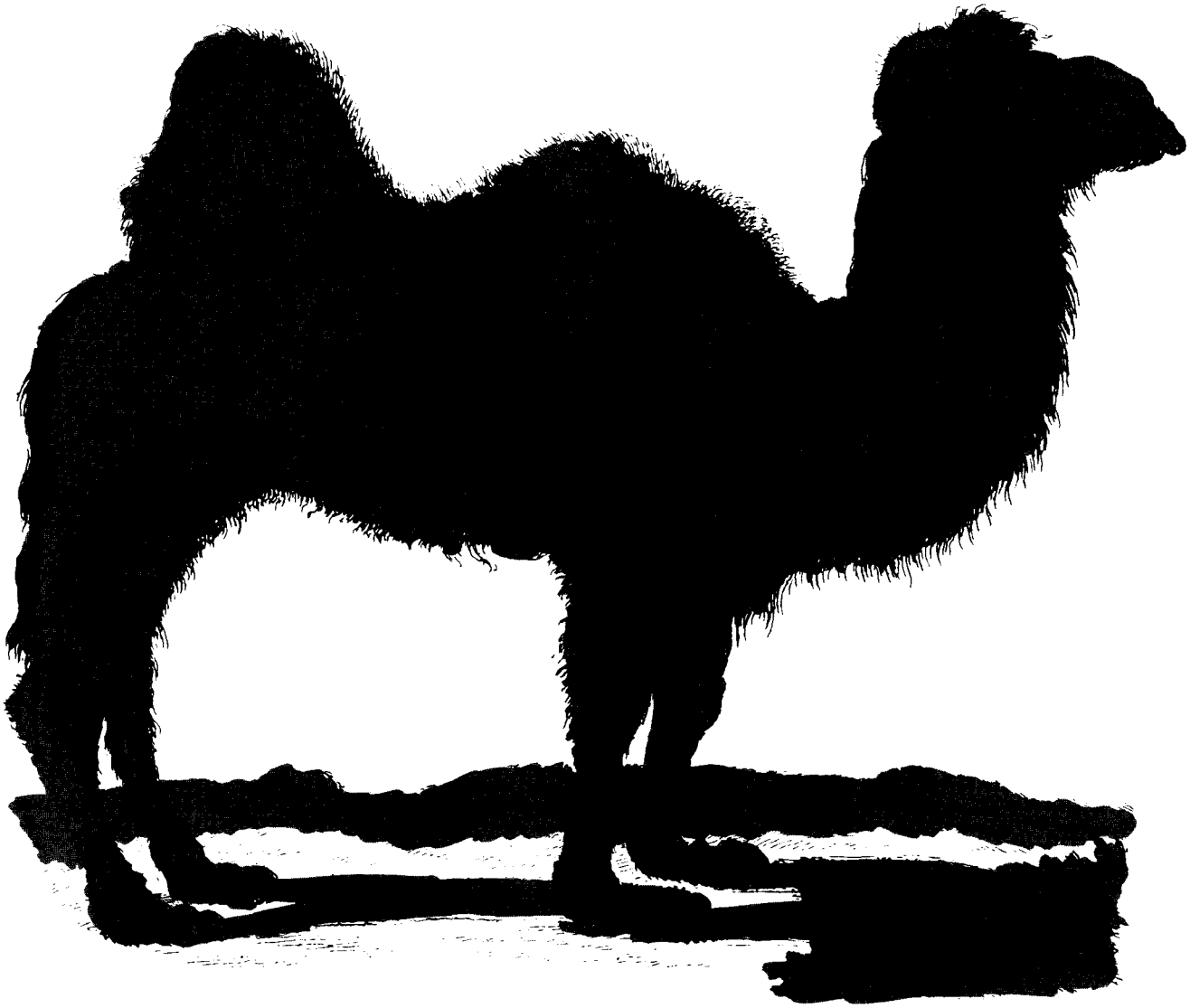

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Umkhonto we Sizwe. . . . Above all the SACP has outlined and enforces the ideology by which the ANC is guided." Breytenbach went on to admit that the SACP has been a "rigidly loyal supporter of Moscow's foreign policy."

The ANC's own commitment to the Soviet bloc is suggested by the statement of its secretary-general, Alfred Nzo, that the "natural and genuine allies" of independent African nations—presumably including an ANC-ruled South Africa—are "the Soviet Union and other socialist countries" (see *World Marxist Review*, December 1984). This year, in its March issue, the ANC's magazine *Sechaba*, printed in East Germany, published the text of a speech delivered in Moscow by Oliver Tambo on the occasion of his being awarded the Soviet Union's "Order of Friendship among Peoples." After proclaiming the ANC's "strong and unbreakable ties of friendship and comradeship with the land of the Soviets," Tambo spoke of the ANC's and Moscow's "shared commitment to the liberation of the peoples." He concluded his speech with these words: "Our common victory on all fronts is assured! Thank you very much, dear comrades."

The evidence cited here reinforces Mr. Roberts's valuable warning about the ANC, and about the folly of Western support or admiration for that group. Further reinforcement can be found in material assembled by Keith Campbell and published in England in 1986 by the Institute for the Study of Terrorism, under the title *ANC: A Soviet Task Force?*

My only quarrel with Mr. Roberts arises from his objection to describing the ANC as a Communist front. It is true that Communist fronts exist largely to deceive gullible non-Communists, and the ANC is too blatantly pro-Soviet to be the ideal instrument of deception. Nevertheless, it has succeeded in deceiving many people. . . . I hope that the West's all too numerous apologists for the ANC will not seize upon Mr. Roberts's comment that the group is "in no intelligible sense" an SACP front, and quote it out of context to justify their enthusiasm for these anti-democratic revolutionaries.

KENNETH H.W. HILBORN
University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Roberts, Jr.'s article on the African National Congress is an all too rare exposition of that organization's real intentions. This excellent piece should be required reading for anyone in a position to affect our relations with South Africa. Our major media indulge in nebulous descriptions of the ANC which invariably avoid mention of its commitment to terrorism now and the establishment of a Leninist police state and centrally-planned economy upon taking power. . . .

JOHN MCCORMACK
Chicago, Illinois

DAVID ROBERTS, JR. writes:

Thomas G. Karis has managed to raise a great many points in a short space. I shall attempt to respond to the more serious allegations.

1. Since Mr. Karis presumed throughout his *Foreign Affairs* article that the great majority of South Africans support the ANC, I gained the perhaps mistaken impression that he was describing the attitude of ANC supporters in the sentence which reads, in full, "Remarkably, neither the deep antagonism toward the U.S. nor acknowledgment of Soviet assistance to the ANC results in a pro-Soviet attitude on international issues." But granting Mr. Karis this one point leaves unexplained the assertions elsewhere in his article that "the ANC historically, politically, and culturally is more attuned to the United States and the West than it is to the Soviet bloc," that "criticism of U.S. policies does not mean . . . that an ANC-led government would be aligned with the Soviet Union," and his palpably false remark that ANC secretary-general Alfred Nzo, who has spoken in glowing terms of the Soviet system, "does not make judgments about Soviet internal policy."

2. Mr. Karis should be apprised that the Soviet Union itself no longer considers the Socialist International "anti-Soviet," and for excellent reasons: among other things, the Socialist International has extended aid to a number of totalitarian movements in the Third World (e.g., the Sandinistas). So the support of the ANC by the Socialist International and by Western governments (some of which have also supported the Sandinistas), which I implicitly acknowledged in my article, proves nothing. Nor does the willingness to exploit the democratic political process of the West entail an admiration of that process, or an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of bourgeois democracy; and neither does it imply that the ANC intends to imitate Western democracy upon coming to power. As Dumi Matabane, the ANC's Washington representative, once told an American audience, "In the future I don't think we would like to have what you call democracy, because we have seen a lot of its weaknesses."

3. Yes, the ANC has met from time to time with South Africans who do not endorse the Freedom Charter, but only for tactical reasons, not out of a willingness to tolerate opposition forces in a liberated South Africa. The rationale for such contacts was described in a 1969 ANC document, which declared: "[N]or must we ever be slow to take advantage of differences and divisions which our successes will inevitably spark off to isolate the most vociferous, the most uncompromising, and most reactionary elements among the whites." But the ANC remains determined, in the words of Oliver Tambo (Kabwe address of 1985), "to vanquish the efforts of schools of thought, different from our own, to resurrect the idea of a Third Force."

The ANC has had some not unexpected success in winning the support of radical white churchmen like Beyers Naude and Catholic Archbishop Denis Hurley, but its initiatives have had little effect on the South African business sector or on the current leadership of the liberal Progressive Federal party (PFP), despite press reports to the contrary. For example, PFP founder Helen Suzman advised the Oxford Student Union in 1986: "I don't think you ought to bluff yourselves . . . into believing the ANC, which now demands no less than a total transfer of power, is striving for a nonracial, democratic South Africa." As for the business leaders who met with the ANC in various African capitals, they learned to their dismay that the ANC remains determined to nationalize everything they have, which is why Gavin Relly of the Anglo-American Corporation announced over South African television (June 19, 1986): "I hold no brief for the ANC."

4. Mr. Karis faults me for believing "that any statement by an ANC member, or, for that matter, in the

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ANC's magazine *Sechaba*, or on Radio Freedom, is necessarily ANC policy." In fact, I never cited an ordinary ANC member, except for the testimony of a former cadre on the Leninist character of ANC political indoctrination. I quoted Oliver Tambo more than anyone else, since he is both president of the ANC and the alleged leader of its putative moderate faction. I employed the early writings of Nelson Mandela to demonstrate that the ANC's anti-American, anti-Western, and pro-Soviet world view goes back to the early 50's, when the United States had little economic influence in South Africa, and could hardly be accused of being the mainstay of apartheid. I quoted Alfred Nzo because he is the ANC's second most important official, and Chris Hani because he is the chief of staff of MK and a possible successor to Tambo. Unsigned articles in *Sechaba* do indeed reflect the official ANC line, and the broadcasts of Radio Freedom, the contents of which are determined by the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity (headed by Thabo Mbeki), are a principal means of communicating with the ANC's internal supporters. I find all of these choices eminently reasonable.

As for Winnie Mandela, although she is not an ANC official, she is perhaps the favorite ANC personality of American liberals. If I had neglected to quote from the speeches of the woman whom Senator Kennedy and other liberals have called "the first lady of South Africa," I would probably have been accused of excluding a moderate voice.

Finally, I took care not to cite a single acknowledged Communist within the ANC leadership, in order to establish that the non-Communists within the ANC are no less committed than are the Communists to totalitarian collectivism.

5. Since Mr. Karis cannot understand how the sum of these quotations might describe a world view, let me try to explain. In the first place, the ANC routinely describes itself as a "vanguard movement"—a term that only has meaning in the argot of Leninism. It describes as "democratic" places like Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, giving one a pretty good idea of how it defines democracy. It uses the word "imperialism" to describe the West and the West only. According to the ANC, even Western Europeans have suffered from *American* imperialism in the form of the Marshall Plan which Nelson Mandela denounced as a mechanism for "gaining control of the economies of European countries and reducing them to a position analogous to that of dependencies." The fact that during the administration of Jimmy Carter, Oliver Tambo could anoint the U.S. the successor to Nazi Germany as "the spearhead of international reaction" indicates something about the depth and virulence of the ANC's anti-Americanism.

In the economic sphere, the ANC has declared its resolve to imitate the Stalinist policies of Angola and Mozambique in liberated South Africa. It has promised to nationalize "the big-business operations which are synonymous with this nation's economy," to take back the land from "the racist white farmers," and to nationalize most of it, to politicize education, to curtail the right of free speech in the name of combating racism and fascism, and, according to ANC sympathizer Howard Barrell, to "break the existing press monopolies—perhaps by nationalization."

This is a world view that the ANC would continue to hold if apartheid were abolished tomorrow. The United States would still be guilty of militarizing the Indian Ocean, of trying "to roll back socialism," of perpetuating the cold war and the arms race, and of plotting nothing less than "world conquest" for the benefit of a few multinational corporations. The Soviet Union would still be, for Alfred Nzo, "the bulwark of peace, security, and happiness for all mankind," while capitalism would still be held responsible for the misery of most of the world's population. In the ANC's view, the future happiness and the very survival of mankind depend upon the planetary triumph of socialism (which it believes is inevitable), and will continue to do so after South Africa is free, democratic, and liberated.

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This is what I meant when I said that the ANC world view had "no logical dependence on the injustices of South Africa's peculiar institution"; so Mr. Karis can cease being puzzled.

6. Finally, Mr. Karis assails me for assuming "that the ANC can be judged alone," rather than in the context of all political forces in South Africa. But this is only to say that I should have written about something other than the ANC. The "straw man" in question is the ANC itself as described in its own words, which Mr. Karis and others (including Roger Thurow of the *Wall Street Journal*) have been striving to keep obscured.

As for Kenneth H.W. Hilborn, I think his fears about the potential misuse of my article are groundless. In saying that the ANC was not a front for the South African Communist party, I merely meant that non-party ANC leaders have no sense of prior organizational allegiance to the SACP, that they are not being "manipulated," as some critics have charged, for the very good reason that there is no need to do so, and that decisions of the ANC's politico-military committee are not predetermined by the SACP. Even the lowest ANC cadre should have some notion of the ANC's ideological character upon the completion of his Communist-directed political education, as Mr. Hilborn himself clearly understands.

Mr. Hilborn is, of course, correct in pointing out that the ANC has in effect served as its own front by effectively concealing its Leninist character and totalitarian intentions from many influential Westerners, as John McCormack also notes, and I thank them both for this and other interesting observations in their letters.

Feminist Criticism

To the Editor of Commentary:

For some years now I have read Carol Iannone's contributions to Commentary with increasing admiration. Her "Feminism vs. Literature" [July] is commendable not only for its clear, coherent argument . . . but also for its precise diagnosis of the chief deficiencies of "feminist criticism," namely, the dogmatic adherence to a preconceived set of assumptions and the uncritical manner in which feminists negate the distinction between first-rate literature and lesser works in the service of an undisguised—and, ironically, relentlessly ideological—attack upon "patriarchal institutions." In studying committed feminist critics, one commonly encounters reductive analyses of great works (e.g., the primary theme of all the major Shakespearean tragedies is "the male world's banishment of the female" . . .) or else breathless comparisons of works such as *King Lear* or Pope's *Rape of the Lock* with "progressive texts" such as Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* and Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century.*

An adversarial stance in the service of truth is a noble thing but, as Miss Iannone demonstrates, . . . the very concept of truth, along with notions of excellence or hierarchical standards of literary value, is anathema to these critics. In place of such a "sexist, racist, and fascist" ideal (as I have heard it described by several feminist critics and English graduate students) as an established literary "canon," we are asked to regard mediocre texts as if they were indistinguishable from the finest creations of literature, merely because of the writer's sex.

It is a measure of the nature of feminist criticism that if a man had written Carol Iannone's essay, it would simply be dismissed as an example of the unregenerate "masculine consciousness" with its inherent need for the oppression or domination of women. But what are the feminists to do . . . about a *woman* who successfully refutes their most fundamental presuppositions? . . .

Michael J. Neth
Wichita, Kansas

To the Editor of Commentary:

Carol Iannone is to be congratulated. . . . She has aptly demonstrated that we can, if we lift our heads from our foxholes before the barrage ends and the enemy is upon us, take full measure of the onrushing host and stop it before any more territory is lost. . . .

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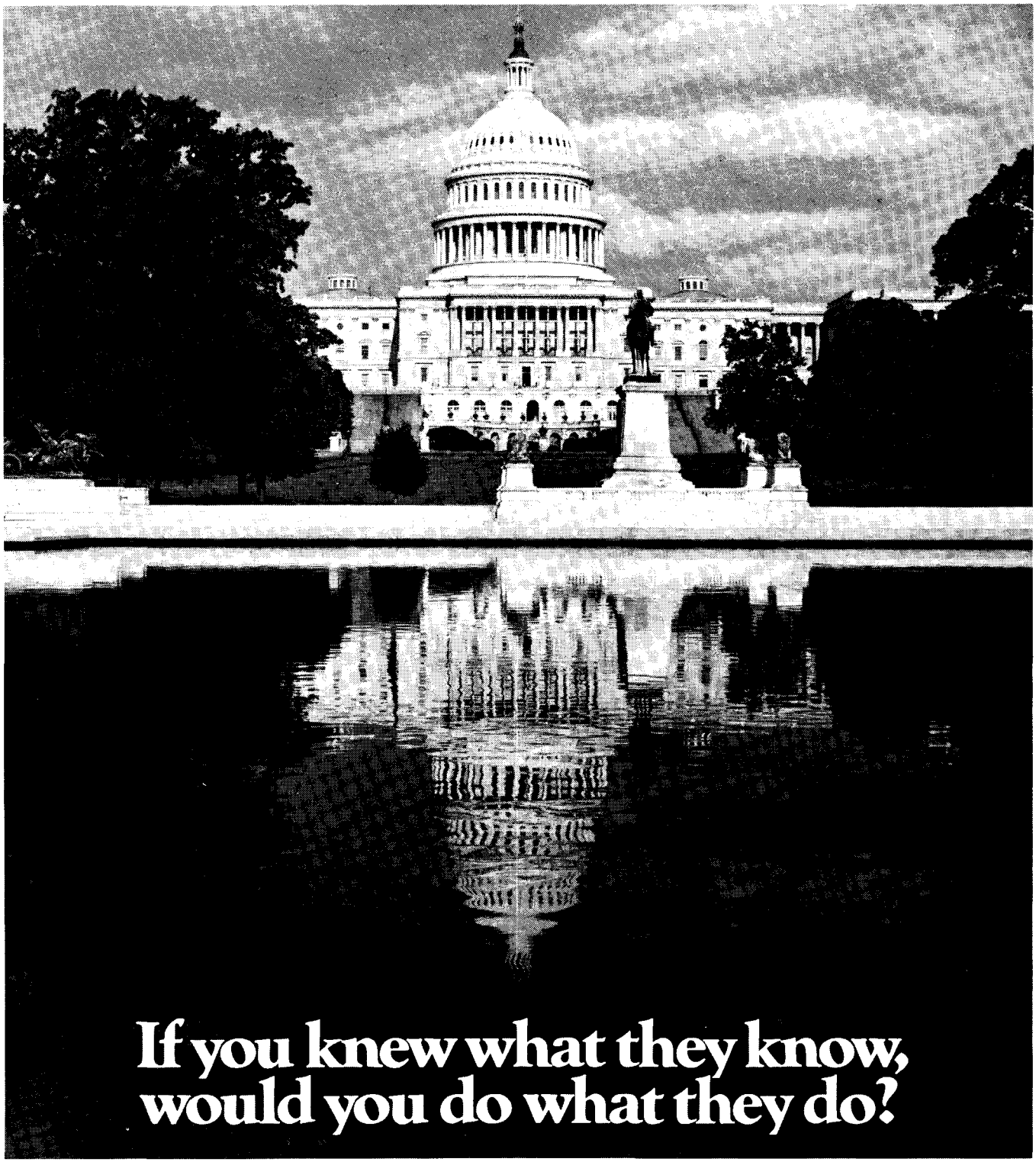

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Capitalism: The Wave of the Future

Jerry Z. Muller

ALMOST from the moment that capitalism came to dominate modern economic life, intellectual observers pronounced its imminent demise. Karl Marx, who did so much to develop the concept and trace the history of what he called the "capitalist mode of production," believed that the day of capitalism was already at dusk, and that the socialist dawn approached. And since the turn of the century the end of capitalism has been regularly predicted by its opponents on both Left and Right, and sometimes by anxious friends as well.

Thus, Werner Sombart, whose book *Modern Capitalism* (1902) helped spread the term "capitalism" beyond the political Left, divided it into "early," "high," and "late" stages, and assumed that he was living in the third. (Sombart himself looked to socialism, and later to National Socialism, to supersede capitalism.) Similarly, the German social-democratic theorist Rudolf Hilferding argued in 1910 that the most recent stage of capitalism, to which he devoted a book entitled *Finance Capital*, would be its last. Thus too, in *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913), Rosa Luxemburg wrote: "Though imperialism is the historical method for prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also a sure means of bringing it to a swift conclusion." From his Swiss exile, Lenin invoked somewhat different arguments to arrive at the same conclusion in *Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism* (1916).

The period between the two world wars saw a fresh succession of prophetic analysts heralding capitalism's passing. The worldwide depression which began in 1929 was regarded by Communists as "the general crisis of capitalism"—a crisis which was supposed to create the objective preconditions for Communist revolution. On the other side of the spectrum, Ferdinand Fried, a leading young journalist of the German radical Right, published *The End of Capitalism* in 1930. In the United States, Howard Scott's Technocracy movement came into vogue in the early 1930's, demanding the replacement of the "price system" by government planning based upon engineering expertise. In England, the sociologist Karl Mannheim asserted in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, published in 1940, that democracy could be salvaged only if it cut its links with capitalism.

At the end of World War II, yet another wave of predictions of the end of capitalism flooded the intellectual marketplace. Speaking on the BBC in November 1945, the historian A.J.P. Taylor assured his radio audience: "Nobody in Europe believes in the American way of life—that is, in private enterprise; or rather those who believe in it are a defeated party and a party which seems to have no more future than the Jacobites in England after 1688." Richard Lowenthal, later a leading figure in the German Social Democratic party, pleaded the case for a federation of European socialist states in his *Beyond Capitalism* of 1946. Even the economist Joseph Schumpeter, no enemy of capitalism, seemed to be saying in his *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* that changes brought about by capitalism itself would result in its decline.

That the days of capitalism were numbered was also, of course, an ongoing contention of postwar Communist ideologists. In the 1960's, the European New Left began to refer to contemporary Western societies as exemplars of "late capitalism"—a revival of Sombart's term. The West German political theorist Jürgen Habermas followed this usage when he entitled his book of 1973, *Problems of Legitimation in Late Capitalism.*

Although these interpretations were often rooted in a Marxist philosophy of history beyond the reach of mere events, they were given a certain plausibility by historical facts. In the West, all the liberal democracies had moved in the decades after 1945 toward some form of welfare state, in which governmental transfer payments and fiscal policies intended to maintain full employment became widely accepted. Whether they welcomed or abhorred it, leading analysts on both the Left and the Right often portrayed the welfare state as a temporary way station on the road to socialism

JERRY Z. MULLER teaches modern European history at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and is the author of *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism.* His article, "Communism, Anti-Semitism & the Jews," appeared in our August issue.

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(or the "road to serfdom," as the conservative economist Friedrich Hayek called it).

Meanwhile, the spread of Communism through the Soviet conquest of all of Eastern and much of Central Europe, and through indigenous revolution in China, North Vietnam, and North Korea, appeared to offer even more striking confirmation of the "late capitalism" thesis. As for the newly decolonizing nations of Asia and Africa, there a native leadership, often educated in the anti-capitalist intellectual milieu of interwar Europe, similarly abjured the market, the profit motive, and private property in favor of purported native traditions of solidarity, married to statist models of development.

II

YET for all these confident predictions, the 1970's and 1980's have seen not the demise of capitalism but the adoption of its central mechanisms in vast areas of the globe where they formerly played a minor role or no role at all. Dramatic instances have occurred in the Pacific rim nations of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong—the so-called "little dragons," which have had spectacular rates of economic growth. India and Egypt, two of the most populous nations on earth, both formerly governed by leading exponents of Third World socialism (Nehru and Nasser), have also moved in a capitalist direction.

Perhaps even more significant has been the hesitant but unmistakable movement toward a greater reliance on the elements of capitalism in much of the Communist world: first in Hungary, then in China, and now even in the motherland of socialism, the Soviet Union. To be sure, this movement has been gradual and equivocal, and varies radically in pace and extent from country to country. It has also had decidedly mixed results. Yet it has already progressed beyond the early stages, when capitalist measures were adopted in a de-facto and almost surreptitious manner. Today, while maintaining verbal allegiance to the disembodied ideal of socialism, Chinese and Soviet officials are increasingly explicit in their criticisms of its institutional foundations.

At the same time, in the West, the economic stagnation of the 1970's served to remind many on both Left and Right that the welfare state rested on a capitalist basis, whose ongoing expansion could no longer be taken for granted. In England, West Germany, and the United States—all three governed in the late 1970's by parties of the moderate Left—simultaneous stagnation and inflation led to electoral shifts which brought to power leaders pledged to expand the role of the market and shrink the role of the state. In the 1980's the governments of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and (to a more limited extent) Helmut Kohl tried to restimulate economic growth by relying more heavily upon the market and appealing to the profit motive through measures intended to increase corporate profitability and decrease taxation rates. All have had considerable success in restraining inflation and reviving the growth of their economies. Yet despite the ideological predilections and expressed intentions of all three leaders, none has pared back government spending as a proportion of GNP or substantially diminished total expenditures on social welfare in real terms.

The cases of England, the United States, and West Germany thus demonstrate both the possibility of refueling welfare-state capitalism through market-centered, profit-oriented strategies and the limits of any challenge to welfare-state capitalism from the Right. The case of France is illuminating in another way: it demonstrates the utter failure of the most radical attempt to go beyond "late capitalism" that we are likely to see for some time, capped by a remarkable reversal of economic policy.

In France, it was the Center-Right that presided over the economic stagnation of the 1970's. Then in 1981 a government of the Left came to power for the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic. Unlike many of its counterparts in Western Europe, the French Socialist party under François Mitterrand scorned the purported constraints of welfare-state capitalism. The 1979 party convention was dominated by the theme of "breaking with capitalism"; during the 1981 election campaign, Mitterrand proclaimed his party's intention to "break with the logic of profitability."

Once elected, Mitterrand moved quickly in the opposite direction from the Thatcher, Reagan, and Kohl governments. To combat unemployment he enacted a program of redistributive reflation, including large increases in family allowances and old-age pensions, and a 10-percent rise in the minimum wage (to which most other wages were linked). The Mitterrand government lengthened holidays and shortened the work week from 40 to 39 hours (at 40 hours' pay). It raised taxes on persons with high incomes. Most strikingly of all, the government nationalized major steel, aircraft, electronics, and chemical firms, as well as the 25 percent of French banks still remaining in private hands. Within a very short time the share of the French economy owned by the government went from 15 percent to over 30 percent. Revenues taxed from the private economy were channeled into the nationalized sector.

The effects of these policies were soon felt. The purchasing power injected into the economy by government social spending was used primarily to buy imported goods, and hence made little mark on the level of unemployment. Labor costs, already high compared with France's major trading partners, went even higher, rendering French exports still less competitive. Profits declined, and

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so of course did private investment. By the end of 1982, inflation was running at over 14 percent per annum, and the budget deficit had ballooned from 24 billion francs in 1980 to 100 billion, with unemployment where it had been when the Left came to power.

Mitterrand now faced the choice of pursuing socialist policies behind a high tariff wall—this would cut France off from participation in the European market, upon which its prosperity had been built—or revising his policies to make France competitive in the international market. He chose the latter course. Under a slogan of economic "modernization," the Mitterrand government reversed many of its previous policies and transformed its rhetoric. In March 1983, it enacted an austerity plan that cut back the level of social benefits, increased employee contributions to the national health-insurance system, and curtailed the indexation of wages. The nationalized firms were put under the control of market-oriented managers who were willing to cut costs to compete internationally. In what was referred to only half-jokingly as "supply-side socialism," corporate taxes were reduced and tax cuts were enacted for the middle class as an incentive to greater economic and entrepreneurial initiative.

A speech by Mitterrand in 1984 conveys the extent of the change: "The French are beginning to understand that it is enterprise that creates wealth, that it is enterprise that creates jobs, and that it is enterprise that determines our standard of living and our place in the world." And Prime Minister Laurent Fabius observed: "The state has encountered its outer limits; it should not move beyond them." The moral of what has been called the long learning curve of the French Left is that after late capitalism comes more capitalism.

III

Since the collapse of the initial French Socialist strategy in 1983, no major Western party of the Left has articulated a principled, detailed alternative to the market-oriented policies ultimately adopted both by governments with a free-market ideology and by those with very different predilections. Indeed, in most Western democracies, parties of the Left are nowadays distinguished from those on the Right (or are split internally) more on questions of defense, foreign policy, and cultural issues than on economic grounds.

This is not to say, of course, that a perfect consensus exists in the West on the virtues and future prospects of capitalism. On the Right, some purist defenders of the "free market" insist that only those societies in which government plays no role in economic life can be regarded as "capitalist." (By this criterion, capitalism does not now exist and never has.) On the Left, where historically the most potent intellectual weapon against capitalism has been the notion of an ideal alternative system, the failures of what the Communists call "real existing socialism" have often led intellectuals to redefine socialism by its ideal attributes of equality and solidarity, without specifying the organizational mechanisms through which such attributes are to be realized. This strategy of retrenchment through redefinition has served to prevent many left-wing intellectuals from coming to terms with the political and economic arguments in favor of the market. The fundamental premise upon which the capitalist economy rests—that the pursuit of individual self-interest can ultimately serve the collective interest—is also regarded as morally scandalous by many intellectuals, for whom the only legitimate social order would be one based upon universal altruism.

Despite such intellectual demurrals on both Right and Left, capitalism is increasingly the only ballgame in town. What do we know about the rules of this game? What, if anything, can we learn from history and from recent experience about the relationship of capitalism to politics and culture?

Let us begin with capitalism and liberal democracy. Richard Hofstadter described the United States in 1948 as a "democracy in cupidity," yet the lesson of modern history would seem to be no democracy without cupidity. Or, to put it more neutrally, a capitalist economy appears to be a necessary condition for liberal democracy.

The tensions between democracy and capitalism are real enough. Inequalities of wealth may create unequal opportunities for political influence in a system of government based upon formal equality of participation. The use of government by organized interest groups to distort market competition comes at the expense of overall economic growth, and also at the expense of consumers who are the primary beneficiaries of a well-functioning competitive market.

This problem is as old as capitalism itself, and is a recurring motif in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. On the one hand, the book is about how the pursuit of self-interest can be channeled through the competitive market to create wealth, or what Smith calls "universal opulence." "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest," wrote Smith in one of his most epigrammatic passages. "We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."

But on the other hand, Smith's book is replete with remarks on the tendency of merchants and members of trade guilds to conspire against the market, and of those with political power to do the same through legal privilege and monopoly. "People of the same trade seldom meet together,"

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he writes, "even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the publick, or in some contrivance to raise prices."

Smith thus exposed a tension between the market, which depends upon the motive of self-interest, and noncompetitive means of pursuing that same self-interest. For self-interest could only be made to serve the general interest when channeled through the competitive market with its attendant risks. Yet the desire to maximize gain while minimizing risk led individuals and economic groups to pursue their self-interest in ways that circumvented or suppressed the competitive market.

The government of Smith's day was liberal but not democratic: political participation and influence was limited to relatively few, who, as Smith pointed out, used their political power to benefit their pocketbooks at the cost of their politically impotent countrymen. With the transition to liberal democracy, the temptation to use political power to circumvent market competition did not disappear; instead it was diffused more widely. When numerous groups use their political power to enforce their economic interests, the result is sometimes economic stagnation or decline.

There are, however, worse things than economic stagnation. There can be pernicious political effects as well, particularly in places where political democracy has been accepted only conditionally, as a means to pursue economic goals. There, the frustration of those goals may lead to a withdrawal of support for democratic institutions themselves, and in this way the political expression of economic conflicts within a market economy can lead to the destruction of liberal democracy.

In any event, while capitalism seems to be a necessary condition of political democracy, it is not a sufficient one: historical experience and recent scholarship make it painfully clear that a capitalist economy is compatible with a wide range of polities, many of them neither liberal, nor democratic, nor pacific. Historically, what moved authoritarian rulers—from the "enlightened absolutists" of 18th-century Europe through the Meiji restorationists of 19th-century Japan—to adopt capitalist measures was principally the desire to provide for military defense or expansion. For the market can be used by government to create guns as well as butter; not only guns, but Zyklon-B gas. Indeed, although the old belief that the captains of German industry brought Hitler to power and provided the direction for his expansionist foreign policy has now been put to rest, an important recent book on I. G. Farben by the historian Peter Hayes shows in detail how the Nazis used the profit motive and structured the market to create economic incentives for German industrial managers to assist in carrying out the government's expansionist and genocidal aims.

Thus liberal democracy appears to require a market economy, but the reverse is not true.

IV

But if capitalism does not inevitably lead to democracy in the political sphere, what of its requirements, and its effects, in the realm of culture?

Max Weber tried to determine why, of all the great world civilizations, it was the Christian West that gave birth to capitalism; he concluded that there was an elective affinity between the psychological needs created by Calvinism and the rationality of modern capitalism. Whether Weber was right or wrong on the question of origins—the logic and evidence of his argument have frequently been called into question—today, the rise of Japan and the "little dragons" of East Asia demonstrates that the development of a capitalist economy is compatible with a much wider range of cultural traditions than many had previously suspected.

The other side of this particular coin is the recurring claim since the 18th century that capitalism erodes traditional cultures and institutions. This is a point on which conservatives and radicals have agreed, though from differing points of view. Eighteenth-century conservatives criticized "luxury" for "confounding ranks" and destroying the firm sense of place hitherto provided by a society in which social status was hereditary and institutionalized in law. By encouraging new patterns of consumption, by creating new possibilities for upward or downward mobility, and by legitimating the pursuit of self-interest, the market loosened older cultural patterns of identity and solidarity. "The age of chivalry is gone," Burke complained in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, "that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever."

What conservatives lamented, some radicals approved, at least conditionally. As the *Communist Manifesto* famously has it:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. . . . Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. . . . All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

A recurrent theme in modern social thought is that capitalism tends to replace small, intimate communities based on custom and shared belief with more anonymous forms of association based upon law and the pursuit of self-interest: status is replaced by contract, *Gemeinschaft* by *Gesellschaft*. Thus the late C.B. Macpherson, in an influential book entitled *The Political Theory of*

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Possessive Individualism, claimed that a capitalist economy creates "economic man," a possessive individualist free of "any but self-interested relations with others." Variations on this theme appear in recent analyses of the "cultural contradictions of capitalism" (Daniel Bell), the "depleting moral legacy" of capitalism (Fred Hirsch), or what Jürgen Habermas calls the "system-induced pathologies of the life-world," by which he means that standards appropriate to the realm of production and exchange come to undermine other, more intimate realms based on shared understandings.

This once-perennial lament of intellectual conservatives has lately been adopted more and more by thinkers on the Left, such as Habermas or, in the American context, Christopher Lasch. "It is the logic of consumerism," writes Lasch, "that undermines the values of loyalty and permanence and promotes a different set of values that is destructive of family life—and much else besides."

Now, a society in which the logic of self-interest and consumerism really did apply to all realms would sooner or later succumb to internal disintegration or external attack. Thus intellectuals sympathetic to capitalism have long argued that a capitalist society *depends* in part upon the continued existence of institutions which cultivate types of human relations at odds with the self-interested individualism of the market.

Adam Smith, for example, set out to explain in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* how individuals endowed with the instinct of self-love so crucial to the functioning of the market could develop into beings capable of sympathy and self-sacrifice. Virtue and conscience, he argued, are developed through belonging to some small group whose members will demonstrate their approval or disapproval of our actions. In *The Wealth of Nations,* Smith was particularly concerned that the morals of the poor would become corrupted as they moved from the village, where their behavior was closely observed by those around them, into the anonymous city, where "conduct is attended to by no one." One antidote to the problem, Smith thought, lay in the new varieties of religious community springing up in the cities. Though he regarded the beliefs promulgated by these sects as superstition, and abhorred their fanaticism, Smith judged that they would provide a functional substitute for older forms of character-building institutions being eroded by capitalism.

One institution which most observers of capitalism have regarded as a necessary counter or complement to the market is marriage and the family. "Though marriage begins in contract," wrote Hegel, "it is precisely a contract to transcend the standpoint of contract." It was in the family, he thought, that the individual first imbibed the experience of intense altruism on which the diffuse altruism of political citizenship ultimately depends.

A host of contemporary thinkers have similarly insisted on the need within capitalist society for community-like institutions which furnish the individual with a sense of belonging and identity. Thus four decades ago Friedrich Hayek, a conservative liberal, attacked "the false individualism which wants to dissolve all these smaller groups into atoms," and maintained that "true individualism affirms the value of the family and all the common efforts of the small community and group." This venerable notion has been reformulated in our day most trenchantly by Peter Berger in his *The Capitalist Revolution.* "Individual autonomy," he writes, "depended historically on a subtle balancing act between liberties and responsibilities, between liberation from communal ties and security within communities. . . . Individual autonomy depended upon balancing institutions, whose function it was to provide the individual with a secure 'base' to venture out into the turbulent public world created by capitalist modernity." Using a different vocabulary, Ralf Dahrendorf has called on liberals to balance their traditional concern with increasing human options with an awareness of the importance of "ligatures," that is, bonds that give meaning to the place which the individual occupies. "Ligatures without options are oppressive," he writes, "whereas options without bonds are meaningless."

It is no wonder, then, that the fate of nonmarket institutions in contemporary capitalist societies has reemerged as a central concern of conservatives, liberals, and radicals alike.

However, those who seek to judge the influence of capitalist economic forms upon culture and upon pre-capitalist institutions such as the family or the church need to distinguish the effects of capitalism from concurrent trends such as urbanization, the division of labor, and technological changes—all of which occur in modern *non*capitalist economies as well. In this perspective, it is far from clear that the market economy is more antipathetic than its alternatives to traditional culture, the family, or other noneconomic institutions of solidarity.

In fact, after two hundred years of Western capitalism one might properly ask the opposite question: how is it that so much of pre-capitalist culture and so many institutions not governed by the pursuit of individual self-interest have survived? One answer is that old institutions take on new functions, and sometimes new institutions take on old functions. The family was once an agency of production; it has long since lost that function, but it has assumed new ones. The Protestant sects about which Smith wrote surrounded

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the individual with a small circle of others who helped preserve his morality amid the anonymity of urban life.

In any case (as Hayek argued acutely in *The Mirage of Social Justice,* and as Michael Novak has emphasized in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*), to regard capitalist society as populated by utility-maximizers, possessive individualists, and addicts of consumption is to confuse real people with ideological caricatures. Very few who participate in the capitalist market do so because their ultimate purpose in life is the accumulation of money, nor have most forgotten the purposes for which they do seek wealth. For most profit-seekers, profit is a means to some other end.

In sum, just as there is no single polity necessarily associated with a capitalist economy, there is no single culture, either. It is precisely the diversity of ultimate ends to which one can put the wealth generated through the market that makes capitalism so compatible with a wide range of cultural practices. As Voltaire wrote some two-and-one-half centuries ago in his *Letters on England:*

> Come into the London Exchange, a place more respectable than many a court. You will see assembled representatives of every nation for the benefit of mankind. Here the Jew, the Mohametan, and the Christian deal with one another as if they were of the same religion, and reserve the name "infidel" for those who go bankrupt. Here the Presbyterian puts his trust in the Anabaptist, and the Anglican accepts the Quaker's promissory note. Upon leaving these peaceful and free assemblies, one goes to the synagogue, the other for a drink; yet another goes to have himself baptized in a large tub in the name of the Father, by the Son, to the Holy Ghost; another has his son's foreskin cut off, and over the infant he has muttered some Hebrew words that he doesn't understand at all. Some others go to their church to await divine inspiration with their hat on their head. And all are content.

The Exchange also had room for anti-clerical libertine writers like Voltaire himself, a frequent speculator in financial securities.

The multiplicity of ends to which profit is but a means allows for the pursuit of lives which may be devoted to the preservation or rejection of tradition, to altruistic or selfish behavior, to push-pin or to poetry. The market allows a thousand flowers to bloom, and weeds as well. To those, on both the Left and Right, who have longed for an integrated national community of shared values, it may be a cause for lament that the market allows people with diverse ultimate commitments and styles of life to live together in relative peace. To admirers of liberty from Voltaire to Hayek, it has been a cause for celebration, providing the only basis of pluralism.

V

Diverse motives have led governments East, West, North, and South toward more capitalist policies in the last decade and a half; as in the past, the quest for national power and plenty has usually been the most compelling. The only common stimulus has been the recognition that the incentive of profit and the coordinating mechanism of the market are more likely to spur production than are altruism, collectivism, or encompassing economic planning.

The moral and political evaluation of this global movement toward capitalism has only begun. It may be comforting to believe that good things come in packages and that there is some inevitable link among the economic, political, and cultural forms we consider most desirable, but the historical experience and analyses recounted here teach otherwise. A market economy may be a prerequisite of liberal democracy, yet there are tensions between economic efficiency and democratic government, and capitalism is also compatible with illiberal and anti-democratic polities. The well-being of a capitalist nation depends on the fact that its citizens are both "economic men" and more-than-economic men and women with non-economic goals. The market may erode noneconomic values, yet it also permits their expression, by allowing those with diverse goals to cooperate without agreement on some ultimate common purpose. Depending in part on political and cultural factors outside the economic realm, capitalism may destroy noncapitalist traditions and institutions, yet it is perhaps more compatible with the preservation of traditional institutions than noncapitalist forms of modernization.

But far from being on its death bed, capitalism—with all its problems and with all its promise, and in diverse protean forms—increasingly looks like the wave of the future that socialism was once thought to be.

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Racial Perversity in Chicago

Joseph Epstein

I WAS five or six years old—the year was either 1942 or 1943—a first-born son, the apple, pear, and pomegranate of my parents' eye, a boy who could add up columns of figures in world-record time and sing a version of "Any Bonds Today" ("Bonds of freedom, that's what I'm selling . . .") that would bring a smile to the thin lips of a pacifist in rimless glasses, when I had my first encounter with the Negro Question. Darling boy, I was always bringing home fresh surprises to delight my parents. One evening, offered a chocolate from a two-pound assortment, I could not decide which I wanted, and so reverted to a decision-making mechanism I must have learned earlier in the week on the playground. "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo," I began, and by the time I arrived at the phrase "catch a nigger by the toe," my father either slapped my face or yelled at me, I don't today remember which.

Since my father was not given to hitting his sons, he probably yelled, but so startled was I by his reaction, it must have felt like a slap. When my tears had dried and he had calmed himself, my father apologized for the violence of his outburst and explained that the word "nigger" was a word filled with hatred, and it should never be on the lips of a Jewish boy, especially now, when our own people were not only being called terrible things in Europe but were being murdered in vast numbers by the Nazis. We were the last people, my father said, to call other people such names.

A few years later, after a scrap with a kid who lived on our block named Billy Lauter, in the midst of which he called me a "dirty Jew," my father explained to me, though I believe I already had a fairly good sense of it, that there were people even in America who had it in for the Jews, who blamed the Jews for the failure in their own lives, who in fact blamed the Jews for everything they did not like in the world. Such people might despise me not for anything I did or stood for but simply for my own name or my looks. They were called, such people, anti-Semites. My father, who was born in Canada, for some reason pronounced the word, as I have since heard others of his generation do, "anti-Semits," with a short *i*, as in *its*.

My father was very sound on the subject of prejudice against Negroes (who did not yet wish to be called blacks) and on anti-Semitism. All that he left out—and a father cannot be expected to tell his children everything—is that there might be some blacks who were also strong anti-Semites.

LOUIS FARRAKHAN'S often-repeated remarks about Judaism being "a gutter religion" and the creation of the state of Israel "an outlaw act," despicable though they are, hardly deserve high marks for originality. From talk of exploitative Jewish landlords ("Only a Jew could squeeze more blood from debt-cursed tenants," wrote W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*) to contemporary disparagements of New York as "Hymietown," a certain amount of anti-Semitism has always lurked on the fringes of black life and sometimes it has crept close to its center. But in Chicago, where I grew up and continue to live, a man named Steve Cokely, a black who until recently was an aide to the city's current mayor, has upped the stakes by claiming, in various public talks to Muslim and other black audiences, that Jewish doctors have been injecting black children with the AIDS virus.

For exotic accusation, this bears comparison with the blood libel, most infamously invoked in modern times when, in Russia in 1911, Mendel Beilis, a Jew, went to trial—and was eventually acquitted—for allegedly murdering a Christian child so that he could use his blood in the baking of Passover matzah. It also gives off a distant, but still deeply unpleasant, whiff of Stalin's infamous Doctors' Plot. True enough, in the case of Cokely's accusation no Jew was put on trial; but what was so sorely disappointing was the response to his mad utterances on the part of the black leadership in Chicago. These ran the short gamut from the vaguely approving to the drearily dithering.

After the story came out in the Chicago press, and pressure gathered to remove Cokely from his $35,000-a-year job as coordinator of special projects at City Hall, the response over local black radio stations was heavily in his favor, while the Reverend B. Herbert Martin, chairman of Chica-

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, a frequent contributor, is the author of four books of essays, including *Plausible Prejudices* and *Once More Around the Block*. A new collection, *Partial Payments*, will be published by Norton next month.

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go's Commission on Human Relations, allowed that Cokely's remarks had "a ring of truth." The acting mayor of Chicago, Eugene Sawyer, who is black, took nearly a week to test the political winds and waters before finally deciding that Cokely had to be fired. In czarist Russia, the Jews suffered greatly at the hands of the Black Hundreds, as the militantly anti-Semitic League of the Russian People (formed in 1904) was called. Was there now aborning, in Chicago, another Black Hundreds, whose members this time around really were black?

Roughly two weeks after the incident broke and Mayor Sawyer finally discharged Steve Cokely as a serious political liability, people in Chicago could contemplate another story with anti-Semitic overtones. At an exhibition at the School of the Art Institute, the academic arm of the city's great art museum, a student named David K. Nelson had executed and hung a painting of the late Harold Washington, Eugene Sawyer's predecessor and the city's first black mayor, dressed in "ladies' loungerie," as the elevator operator at Marshall Field's used to call it, under the title *Mirth and Girth*. A work of all-too-representational art, it depicted the late mayor in the eighty-or-so-pound overweight condition in which he had died (of a heart attack); the women's underwear was construed—and was no doubt intended to be construed—as a thick-fingered allusion to rumors that Harold Washington had been a homosexual. ("Girth and Mirth," I have subsequently learned, is the name of a lonelyhearts club for overweight homosexual men.*) The painting was outlandish, outrageous, *outré* in every way—in short, rather a typical art-student joke.

At City Hall, however, not everyone was laughing. Harold Washington, who died while in office, is still very much in his "Harold, We Hardly Knew Ye" stage, with black politicians and the white liberals among his staff and supporters doing their best to emulate, on a local scale, the Camelotians who helped build the myth about the greatness of John F. Kennedy. Ridiculing the fallen leader was not to be tolerated. When they learned about the painting, a small group of black aldermen, with some cops from City Hall in tow, trooped off to the School of the Art Institute and jerked it from the wall—"arrested" it, in the fatuous word of one alderman—and a policeman dragged it off into "custody."

Later, one of the black aldermen claimed that "the fellow who drew [the painting] was Jewish," which in fact David K. Nelson is not. According to another alderman, a former Black Panther named Bobby Rush, the uproar against them for having confiscated the painting, and thereby having violated the First Amendment, contrasted badly with the failure of any whites to come forth to protect Steve Cokely's First Amendment rights; this showed, to his mind, a "double standard." Meanwhile, speaking of the double standard, officials of the School of the Art Institute, in response to an act that was not essentially but precisely criminal, apologized for permitting the painting to be exhibited, took on themselves the charge of racial insensitivity, and, by way of making amends, promised more jobs for blacks at the school.

Now the incident at the Art Institute was, from one standpoint, pure comedy of the grotesque. And Steve Cokely, it becomes evident fairly quickly when one reads the transcripts of his perfervid talks, is a man who has come unhinged with race paranoia; no doubt he sees a white conspiracy when he burns his toast. Nor was Cokely a figure of any importance at City Hall. As a man high up in the government of Mayor Sawyer told me, "Cokely's just an asshole," a term which, in the lexicon of Chicago politics, speaks not only to character but to significance. But if Cokely was insignificant in the current government of Chicago, and if the forcible removal of a student's painting is not comparable to *Kristallnacht*, nonetheless, for a time one had the feeling of a city out of control. As Mike Royko, Chicago's most widely-read columnist, put it shortly after the incident at the Art Institute: "Apparently it hasn't sunk in to Sawyer, Evans, Streeter, Shaw, Rev. Willie Barrow, and the rest of the black power structure that this is the third largest city in the United States, population about three million people, with billions of dollars in business and industry. This is no tanktown that you're supposed to be running."

Everyone in Chicago of any intelligence, black or white, had to have been repelled by the clownishness of such behavior. For Jews, though, more than clownishness was entailed. Why had it occurred to an ignorant alderman to claim that the student who painted the portrait of Harold Washington was a Jew? And if Steve Cokely was so insignificant, why had none of the city's black leaders risen up immediately and authoritatively to dissociate themselves from his maniacal blatherings? The standard explanation is that black politics in Chicago is currently very much in flux, and so tenuous, so fragile, is their hold on power that black politicians cannot afford to alienate any portion of the black voting population, including the most extreme.

Like all standard explanations, however, this one does not explain nearly enough.

WHERE I grew up in Chicago there were scarcely any blacks nearby. No black student went to our grammar school, and

* I learned about this from the excellent article, "Black and White Mischief in Chicago," by Algis Valiunas in the October 1988 *American Spectator*. As for the rumors of Washington's homosexuality, people close to him say that there is nothing to them, and adduce as evidence various of his former female friends whom he inserted—in the grand Chicago style—into jobs at City Hall.

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in our high school of roughly 3,000 students there were perhaps six or seven blacks, most of them girls. Unlike the situation described by Norman Podhoretz in "My Negro Problem—And Ours," his extraordinary 1963 essay about being terrorized as a boy by young blacks in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, there were no black kids in my neighborhood; instead, there were mostly Jews like ourselves moving in and a Gentile white-collar class slowly but steadily departing as we arrived.

In Chicago, long before the word *ethnic* came into currency, people tended to prefer to live among their own. More than in any other American city I know, in Chicago people's experiences were bounded, psychologically as well as geographically, by the neighborhood in which they grew up and in which many spent their entire lives—and many are still so bounded. Even today, when a Chicagoan, meeting another, is asked where he comes from, he is likely to mention the neighborhood (South Shore), or if he is Catholic the parish (St. Gregory's), or if he was athletic the playground and gym nearest his home (Chase Park), or if he is political his ward (42nd). Driving along one of the city's lengthy thoroughfares—North Avenue, Harlem, Ashland—one can register the changing ethnic composition by the names over the shops, as Mexican elides into Polish into Greek into Italian into German into Swedish into East Indian and less and less nowadays into Jewish. Chicago is a vast pot in which nothing quite melts.

Chicago's dramatic skyline, its oceanic lake, its Gucci-oid shops along Michigan Avenue, its French Impressionists at the Art Institute, its symphony orchestra, its stately gray university—these are all among the city's great ornaments, but its real life has always been lived within the neighborhoods. Unless one happens to be either wealthy or young, in which case one will live along Lake Shore Drive or near Lincoln Park or in one of the formerly working-class neighborhoods now rehabilitated, one resides in one of the traditional Chicago neighborhoods. These fan out across the city, north to south, east to west, winding around freeways and sections of light industry, filling out the utterly flat prairie landscape. Chicago neighborhoods tend to be dominated by bungalows or two-, three-, or six-flat apartment houses with occasional courtyard buildings. In the neighborhood are one's church, public (or religious) school, shopkeepers of one's own religion or nationality, and stores that cater to one's ethnic taste in food and clothes and entertainment. Insular if not isolated, each neighborhood in Chicago tends to be a village unto itself. None of these is likely to be mistaken for Versailles, or London SW1, though most, however modest, are meticulously maintained, the lawns and small settings of shrubs carefully manicured, the buildings tuckpointed tight against the harsh Chicago weather. The spirit of a typical Chicago neighborhood tends to be lower-middle-class: the kid at a city college taking a vocational course, money in an account at a nearby savings and loan, supper eaten in the kitchen.

In Chicago, too, people have overwhelmingly voted Democratic without being especially liberal, either politically or psychologically. For all the gabble about its rich ethnic diversity—the city is said to have more Poles than any city in the world but Warsaw, more Greeks than any city but Athens—Chicago has also traditionally accommodated a strong interior xenophobia. Affection among the city's ethnic groups has never been in serious danger of spinning out of control. "Anyone who has grown up in Chicago," I recently had occasion to write, "knows that the Italians don't trust the Jews, who don't think that much of the Germans, who tend to be contemptuous of the Irish, who don't care much for the Poles, who could live nicely without the Greeks, who feel the East Indians are a pain, and who themselves wish the city's Spanish-speaking population would get their damn kids under some kind of control." The genius of the old Chicago political machine was to keep all these groups if not in harmony then at least at bay, chiefly by reassuring everyone that he would get his, and, in hewing to the machine line, the Irish and Polish and Jewish and ethnic aldermen did get theirs, both for themselves and for their constituents. Or at least they did for a good while.

When I was a kid, the nearest thing we had to Coney Island was a large amusement park on the near northwest side, near Lane Tech High School, called Riverview. In those days Riverview was noted for its impressive roller coasters, its parachute drop, and other fine artificial inducements to terror and vomiting. But the single item in the park that always caught my attention, caught it and transfixed it, were three cages, the bottoms of which were filled with two or three feet of water, each containing a platform upon which sat a youngish black man. A crude backdrop displayed painted palm trees, suggesting a jungle setting. For a quarter you purchased three scruffy baseballs that you threw, from a distance of roughly 50 feet, at a round metal plate a foot or so in diameter that stood out midway along the side of each cage. Hit the plate and you released the platform, which dropped the black man into the water. It wasn't easy, and what made it more difficult was that the young men in the cages taunted you with teasing remarks. "C'mon, fatboy, that the best you can do?" "Pretty poor, four-eyes, better get a seeing-eye dog." Or, to an Asian, "No bowl of rice, friend, chop, chop." Men would grow enraged, and spend five and six bucks trying to knock their tormentors into the water.

Standing there, riveted with fascination, I would sometimes watch this mad game for as long as

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an hour at a time. Why did these young black men take such a job? Because they were moderately well paid for it? Or because it permitted them to be among the few black men in the country at that time who could strike back, at least through insult? Who were the true tormentors here, anyway? The symbolism of it was overpowering, and yet a bit confusing. Why did the game require blacks? Somehow, young Jews or Asians or Mexicans or tough Irish in the cages would not have worked at all.

Dave Matthes, who was a porter at my father's place of business, might conceivably have been in one of those cages at Riverview. Dave was in his late twenties, was a serious diabetic, and had a jaunty walk. A ladies' man, he wore expensive hats, usually of odd and interesting colors, burnt orange or smoky blue, which he did not remove while on the job; he also wore an apron over his always sharp street clothes. On a shelf at the back of his locker, in a cigar box, Dave kept a small cache of pornography and sexual paraphernalia: decks of cards with murky photographs, and condoms in various colors, one with a feather attached. It was not long after Dave took me into his confidence and showed me this stuff that I, his assistant at age sixteen, asked if he could arrange to get a false I.D. for me and a friend so that we could be served in bars. Not, said Dave, a problem.

The sunny Sunday afternoon we picked him up, he came sauntering down the stairs of his apartment building on Douglas Boulevard, in what had only a few years earlier been a Jewish neighborhood, wearing the smoky blue hat with the dark green band, small orange and red feathers in the band giving it a touch of brighter color. He had on a shirt handed down to him by my father's partner, a silken affair, also in blue, with a monogram not his own. It turned out that the man who was to get the false I.D. for us was an undertaker on Lake Street who was a notary public. We walked downstairs, rang a bell, and were greeted by a heavyset black man in an undershirt. He was wearing a tied nylon stocking on his head, to keep his hairdo in place, and one of his front teeth was encased in gold. We followed him into a large room, which contained a few coffins and, over in a corner, what I took to be a corpse on a table under a sheet. Dave explained what we needed. The man said he could supply us with two notarized affidavits, which we could fill out any way we wanted. The affidavits were lengthy—unfurled, they may have been three feet long—and of course utterly hopeless for the mildly corrupt uses to which we planned to put them. The undertaker charged us six dollars each for the documents; we paid without complaint and, once we dropped Dave off back at his apartment, laughed about it afterward.

If Dave Matthes represented one part of the black world, Hazel Morgan represented distinctly another. Hazel Morgan was my father's secretary and bookkeeper; she was cheerful, meticulous, utterly middle-class in manner and style. I greatly respected her, and so did my father who, though he was very far from being political, wanted to do what he could to see blacks get on in the world. He wrote modest checks for the United Negro College Fund and for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In his business dealings with blacks, he went out of his way to be helpful, dispensing advice and credit (where he might not have done so to a white customer in a similar condition of need). Whether my father set out to hire a black secretary and bookkeeper, I rather doubt; but I know that in Hazel Morgan he got good value, and appreciated it.

EACH evening Hazel was picked up by her husband, a dark, small, compact man who dressed, as she did, in the costume of the middle class: suit, tie, a good hat. In his late forties, perhaps early fifties, Mr. Morgan was a figure of dignity, with a slight edge of belligerence. If asked, I should have said he was an accountant or perhaps a high-school principal. Actually, he was a guard in a bank. Perhaps what put the edge of belligerence into him was the fact that his wife had a higher-status job than he; or perhaps it was his belief that the world—it was the early 1950's—was too heavily stacked against him as a black man. In any event, the belligerence overflowed when, one summer, his wife worked through one week of her vacation, for which she received her vacation salary and an extra week's wages. Mr. Morgan felt she should have received double salary, and Hazel, caught in the middle, reported her husband's views to my father. My father felt otherwise. Fair was fair; business was business. When Hazel's husband thenceforth came to pick her up, he hardly spoke to any of us. The bad feeling was very strong. I recall thinking that in this matter my father was quite right, but in spite of this I wished at the time that he had given in.

I had come to believe that blacks generally had been so unjustly treated that reparations needed to be paid. When I was an adolescent I had no ideas coherent enough to be called a politics, but of the mistreatment, and hence injustice, meted out to blacks I had not the slightest doubt. Evidence was everywhere. Blacks worked at the most menial jobs: shoveling coal, washing dishes, cleaning streets. (Black teachers, policemen, physicians, and other professionals worked in black neighborhoods, and so one did not see them.) They were denied access to many middle-class amenities. The first time I remember seeing a black as a customer in a Chicago restaurant was in Hyde Park in the middle 1950's, when I was a student at the University of Chicago, and found myself seated at a rib joint called the Tropical Hut across from Sugar Ray Robinson and a distin-

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guished-looking gray-haired black man who may have been his manager. At the University of Chicago, one saw an occasional couple in a mixed marriage, but then the University of Chicago wasn't the world, which is why so many people have had trouble leaving it.

On the other side of the racial divide, closer to home, my mother had a friend, Marge, a tall, freckled, good-hearted Jewish woman who was locked into a hopeless twenty-year love affair with a beefy, citywise Irishman, Fred, who was himself locked into a Catholic marriage from which in those days there was no escape. Fred owned a piece of a bar and grill on the near South Side, which one night when he was behind the bar a black man came in to rob. Before Fred could reach the baseball bat hidden beneath the bar, he was on his back contemplating the knife protruding from his stomach. Not exactly the black man's friend before this incident, Fred now became positively obsessed with the subject of race. "Nigger" was the only word he ever used to refer to blacks, and he referred to them endlessly. Fred was otherwise a jolly enough fellow, full of information about good restaurants, payoffs at City Hall, and other rich Chicago lore, but when he used that word it could chill your blood and stop your heart, so much hatred was there in it.

Did Chicago have more people like Fred than other cities did—people with a case and a grudge, serious haters of blacks? Impossible to say. What Chicago did have was a lot of people who, in looking upon the growing black population of the city, felt they had a lot to lose: their neighborhoods, which were the centers of their lives, and the value of their generally modest houses, which were their single largest investment and their legacy to their children. They looked at the black neighborhoods in the city, almost always scenes of fairly complete devastation, and saw their own future in peril.

When, in 1951, a black bus driver named Harvey Clark, Jr. moved into an apartment in Cicero, a heavily Slavic working-class suburb just to the west of the city, *they* bombed him out. When in 1966 Martin Luther King, Jr. brought his civil-rights crusade up north to Chicago, not only was he politically outmaneuvered by Mayor Richard J. Daley but, in a protest march for open housing in a neighborhood called Marquette Park, *they* threw bottles and rocks at the marchers and stopped King cold. Who were *they*? The neo-Nazis and the Northern Ku Kluxers, the goons and the thugs, the worst elements going. As like as not, most of the people in the neighborhoods neither cheered them on nor were proud of such viciousness, but at the same time, my guess is, they may have been more than a bit relieved.

People in Jewish neighborhoods in Chicago have neither sought nor known such relief. Of old Jewish neighborhoods in the city, first the near West Side, then Austin, then South Shore, all have gone black, some very quickly, some after the failure of heartbreaking efforts at integration. (Albany Park, another once heavily Jewish neighborhood, is today heavily Hispanic.) I used to think there was a natural progression to this, that blacks followed Jews naturally, one despised group on the heels of another. But there is nothing natural about it. What has tended to keep blacks from moving into white ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago, blue-collar or lower-middle-class, has been the threat of violence. Jews do not threaten violence—"When's the last time you saw a black man afraid to go into a Jewish neighborhood because he might get mugged by an accountant?" quips the comedian Jackie Mason—nor do they long abide it. If they are liberal, Jews attempt integration; if they are not, they move on. If integration fails—as it did in the South Shore neighborhood—Jewish liberals, too, eventually move on.*

That Jews have never resorted to violence against blacks, that Jews have always been in the forefront of serious attempts at integration within neighborhoods in Chicago and its suburbs—none of this seems in any way to carry any weight or to have undercut black anti-Semitism. Writing in Commentary in 1948, before integration had achieved the status of even a dream, and when black separatism was not a political idea but a fact of life, James Baldwin noted: "Jews in Harlem are small tradesmen, rent collectors, real-estate agents, and pawnbrokers; they operate in accordance with the American business tradition of exploiting Negroes, and they are therefore identified with oppression and hated for it." In Chicago, this same explanation is often still given to account for black anti-Semitism. But Baldwin was writing fully forty years ago, with some sociological reality on his side. Today such reasoning has little to do with reality.

The year 1968, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., was the year of the burning and looting by blacks of their own neighborhoods on the West Side of Chicago. But even earlier than this you would be unlikely to have found many Jewish (or indeed many white) merchants or businessmen in black neighborhoods on the West or South Side, for the uncomplicated reason that anti-white feeling had set in there in earnest, and it was dangerous for whites to go into those neighborhoods, and certainly to maintain businesses in them. Although Black Muslim ministers and some of the more overheated orators at Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH might continue to invoke the trope of the Jewish landlord to fire up

* An account of the failure of integration in South Shore is offered in Chapter 5, "The Last White Liberals: Bernie and Roz Ebstein," in Jonathan Kaufman's *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (Scribners, 311 pp., $19.95).

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their speeches, the Jewish landlord had pretty much become just that—a trope and nothing more. Owning property in black neighborhoods was a difficult proposition: for one thing, one could not collect rents without resorting to extreme means; for another, any whites, let alone Jews, who might have owned what used to be called slum property were likely to receive a terrific lashing in the press and from black pressure groups.

MENTION of James Baldwin is a reminder to me that I once forced a copy of *Notes of a Native Son*, his first collection of essays, on a young Southern woman whom I thought—how to say this?—insufficiently philoblack, all but making her reading of it a condition of our continuing to see each other. The book was in the Beacon Press edition, which then sold for $1.45, and on the front cover bore a full-face picture of its youthful author, with a faint mustache, wide nose and dramatic nostrils, hooded, somewhat hyperthyroid eyes. Baldwin was thirty-one when the book was published in 1955, and he had written many of the essays in it in his middle twenties. My God, I remember thinking, this guy is going to become a great American writer. As it turned out, James Baldwin—"Jimmy" Baldwin to everyone who knew him in the intellectual world of New York—turned out to be one of the saddest casualties of contemporary literature. He went on to trade his glittering talent for a pot of message.

From the evidence of *Notes of a Native Son* one would have thought he would be the last black writer to do so. It was the young James Baldwin who, in his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," demolished Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, closing on this resounding note: "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended." In "Many Thousands Gone," he showed himself just as stringent about Richard Wright's *Native Son*, arguing that its assumptions reduce the person to anonymity and that, moreover, it is not the writer's responsibility to be the representative and leader of his people: "The unlucky shepherd soon finds that, so far from being able to feed the hungry sheep, he has lost the wherewithal for his own nourishment: having not been allowed—so fearful was his burden, so present his audience!—to recreate his own experience." Nearly everything in *Notes of A Native Son* led one to believe that James Baldwin would not descend to protest politics but would instead become the writer he foreshadowed when, in "Many Thousands Gone," he said: "But the fact is not that the Negro has no tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition articulate." The writer who would do this was not to be James Baldwin.

Any study of Baldwin ought properly to concentrate on his use of pronouns. One of the impressive things about *Notes of A Native Son* is that, in the essays in which Baldwin does not specifically tell you that he is black, there is no compelling reason for you to think he is. At one point he writes of "our dehumanization of the Negro," at another: "We do not know what to do with him in life; if he breaks our sociological and sentimental image of him we are panic-stricken and we feel ourselves betrayed." The effect is to make you feel that we are all in this together.

But soon the "we" and the "our" disappear. In a 1964 COMMENTARY symposium,* Baldwin remarks: "There is a sense in which one can say that the history of this country was built on my back. I don't mean that other people didn't pay for it too, but I do mean that the economy would be very different today if I hadn't built the railroads for nothing, if I hadn't picked the cotton for nothing—if, in fact, my role weren't to keep on doing all that, in effect, for nothing." Now the world is clearly beginning to be divided into *I* and *they*, and "they" have "sexless little voices" and "do not believe in death, and this is why the darkness of my skin so intimidates them," or so Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*, in 1963. It would get worse, shriller and shriller, finally killing the artist in James Baldwin, whose novels and essays toward the close of his life often lapsed into sheer rant.

The significance of James Baldwin today is not as a writer—certainly he came nowhere near developing into the great American writer I once thought him destined to be—but as the man who perfected the art of victimization. The trick behind it is simultaneously to play martyr and bully. "The Negroes of this country may never be able to rise to power," wrote Baldwin in a characteristic passage in *The Fire Next Time*, "but they are very well placed indeed to precipitate chaos and ring down the curtain on the American dream." Radical feminists and politicized homosexuals have been quick to pick up on this playing of the martyr and the bully, so that one sees it everywhere today. But its most prominent practitioners are still the spokesmen for American blacks.

AND, of course, it works. Or at least it works in preemptively silencing any opposition. One had a glimpse of how effectively it could do this more than twenty years ago, when, in the *New Republic*, the critic Richard Gilman, reviewing a book of essays by Eldridge Cleaver (then a Black Panther and a confessed rapist), announced that he could not, in all conscience, bring himself to judge Cleaver's views or those

* "Liberalism and the Negro: A Round-Table Discussion," March 1964.

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of any black writing directly out of personal experience. Gilman noted that he was certain to be misunderstood, but his line of reasoning was plain enough. Cleaver's was "a Negro perspective," Gilman averred, and "his writing remains in some profound sense not subject to correction or emendation or, most centrally, approval or rejection by those of us who are not black." Gilman asked for "a suspension of judgment"—more specifically, a moratorium on the public act of judgment—because, given all that blacks had undergone, they could not really be judged by white standards ("all those Mediterranean values," Gilman writes, "which have become so nearly empty . . .").

What one might call the Baldwin method, met by what one might call the Gilman response, adapted by so many people who are unlikely to have read or heard of either man, has dominated the discussion of race in this country for at least the last twenty years. It has also been abetted by the "racism defense." Many modern systems of thought seem to have such a built-in defense, whereby one challenges the good faith of a critic by suggesting that his criticism only serves to corroborate the validity of one's own system. Thus, to criticize Freudianism is to be suspected of harboring deep repressions, to criticize Marxism is to be branded a spokesman for one's own social-class background.

Similarly, to criticize anything having to do with black programs or public figures is to be accused of racism. So unpleasant is it to be called a racist that the mere threat has been enough to deter almost all criticism of black politicians and spokesmen, at least in public. Recall the stomping that Mayor Edward Koch of New York took in the national press for what seems to me the utterly unexceptionable comment that a Jew would have to be crazy to vote for Jesse Jackson. Koch was, announced the New York *Times*, "divisive": if "divisive" is not quite a code word for "racist," it does mean that one has greatly overstepped the bounds and had better watch it.

Not many days go by in Chicago when the racism defense is not called into play. A black Chicago journalist named Vernon Jarrett, who has a column in the Chicago *Sun-Times* and does a television commentary on the local ABC affiliate, would be rendered quite speechless if one took the words *racism* and *racist* away from him. Black aldermen regularly appear on television announcing fresh evidence of racism in anyone who opposes whatever it is they happen to be supporting at the moment. Apparently one does not even have to be white to be charged with racism. Recently, a security firm headed by a black man was fired by the Chicago Transit Authority—violent crime, including murder and rape, has risen sharply on the city's el trains and buses. Up went the cry of racism, even though blacks have tended to be prominent on the board of the Chicago Transit Authority, the mayor is black, and blacks are now in control of the city council. The charge of racism is becoming, to do a turn on Dr. Johnson on patriotism, the first refuge of the phony and the incompetent.

Is it, I wonder, racist, or simply obvious, to note that vast sections of Chicago are out of bounds to whites and a nightmare to the respectable black people who live in them, owing to black youth crime? (Hispanic streets gangs, too, have been no small problem in Chicago.) No local black leader ever mentions this as the staggering problem it is, let alone talks about it seriously. Yet the terror of youth crime—on the streets and in the schools—is at the heart of the feelings among whites about blacks in Chicago.

I have sometimes tried to imagine myself a middle-class black man—a lawyer perhaps, or a professor—sitting in my comfortable apartment on Sheridan Road along the lake before my television set watching the ten o'clock local news. The lead story is a cop-killing; a black man in his early twenties is shown, handcuffed, being taken into custody. There follows a segment on two young men who have raped and robbed a seventy-five-year-old white woman; mug shots are shown of two teen-agers in the hairdo of wet-looking ringlets known as the drippy. Later in the news a young black woman is said to be wanted by the police in Gary for deserting three children in an unheated apartment with no food for two days. What do I, a middle-class black, feel as these horrors are paraded past me? Sympathy for the young men and women as essentially victims who are not to be blamed? Or shame? Or unspeakable sadness? I try to imagine.

What I do not have to imagine are the three tallish black adolescents walking toward me, on the block where I live. The street is otherwise deserted and it is around midnight. Could this be it, I wonder, the mugging (vague word, covering so many kinds and degrees of violence) that I have thus far avoided? Has my time now come? I have $70 or so on me, a wristwatch, a gold wedding band. My breath coming in short takes, I cross at a jog over to the other side of the street while these guys are still maybe thirty yards away. They pass without noticing me, and as they do I see that two of them are wearing jackets marked Evanston Track and all are clean-cut. I have in my mind done them an injustice; I have made a racial assumption, and it turned out wrong. Yet under similar circumstances, I regret to have to report, I would do it again. In our day, the wisdom of city-living holds that paranoia is the better part of valor. This is the pass to which we have come.

Chicago is no longer a predominantly white city. It is not even white in majority. Blacks are said to constitute more than 40 percent of the population, Hispanics roughly another 12-15 per-

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cent, and Asian and East Indian segments of the population are on the rise. I have seen it in print that only 23 percent (in another story, 18 percent) of the public-school population in Chicago is white. It is said, too, that in recent decades more than 200,000 white families have left for the suburbs, where the schools are better and the crime less.

A substantial number of these families have been Jewish. Chicago is today a less Jewish city than it was when I grew up in it. The only heavily populated Jewish neighborhood in the city is West Rogers Park. Once a place for Jews very much on the way up, West Rogers Park today feels tired, a bit played out. Devon Avenue, its main shopping street, has begun to resemble Bombay, for East Indian shops, particularly sari palaces, are now prevalent on large stretches of the street. The aging and the Orthodox seem chief among the Jews who remain in West Rogers Park.

I MENTION this mainly to underline the fact that Jews are no great threat to the political power blacks have amassed in Chicago. In contrast to the events surrounding the New York teachers' strike in 1968, in Chicago blacks and Jews have not gone head to head on any serious issue. If anything, Jews were decisive in helping blacks in Chicago attain their political power. In the 1983 election that made Harold Washington the city's first black mayor, Jews, largely those living along the lakefront and in traditionally liberal Hyde Park, gave him 43 percent of their vote—against a Jewish Republican candidate named Bernard Epton and in a city where voting was otherwise strictly along racial lines. The slogan, "Epton—Before It's Too Late," will give you some notion of the generally high tone of the campaign.

Since his death, Harold Washington has become what is known as a contrast gainer: next to the men who have followed him he looks good. Opposed every step of the way by white aldermen in the Chicago city council, Washington kept his head and his dignity, letting most of the racial ugliness come from the other side, until he attained a majority and could put through some of his own programs. Harold Washington was no great leader, it was not clear that he was even very efficient, but he was not a hater. Whites, Jews among them, worked in his administration in such central appointive jobs as city corporation counsel and budget director. He genuinely tried to eliminate the old machine system whereby one could not sell the city a paper towel or an eraser without an inside connection or an under-the-table deal that would make a Byzantine lawyer blush, and he achieved some success in this line.

What Harold Washington could not do was to stop the dread feeling that the city of Chicago is in a hopeless slide. The Housing Authority, always the scene of rich public squalor and scandal, lost a $50-odd-million federal grant because it did not get a perfunctory application in on time. In the Chicago public schools, between 43 and 53 percent of students entering high school never graduate, and in some schools the noncompletion rate is 75 percent. Rape and murder on the rapid transit, while not everyday occurrences, happen often enough to lose their shock value. With these kind of troubles, let us not descend to speak of pothole repairs, garbage collection, and sewage treatment.

Harold Washington had this in common with Jesse Jackson: he never publicly repudiated Louis Farrakhan's anti-Semitism. Unlike Jesse Jackson, he was never called upon to do so; this, an aide of Washington's recently told me, was just as well, for it was a fight he had no wish to get into, having his dance card already full with conflicts in the city council. Washington had his own problem distancing himself from Jackson, who made himself prominent at Washington's election-night celebration and at his funeral. But if the Steve Cokely incident had occurred when Washington was alive, he would have had to take a stand, which would have meant rejecting Cokely and, by extension, Louis Farrakhan and, by implication, Jesse Jackson. Would he have done it? People close to him say that he would, and without much flinching. Who knows?

But Harold Washington was not alive, and the acting mayor of Chicago, Eugene Sawyer, did not know what to do. The people around him were no less muddled—and worse. At a meeting of an advisory committee to Sawyer, one of the black members equated Steve Cokely's remark about Jewish doctors inoculating black children with AIDS with Ed Koch's remark about Jews having to be crazy to vote for Jesse Jackson. "The dismaying fact remains," wrote Eugene Kennedy in an op-ed piece in the New York *Times*, "that hardly any Chicagoan of major influence in government, religion, education, and business has spoken out strongly, unambiguously, and consistently against the anti-Semitism that has infected the city's life. . . . Today, the loudest thing here is the silence greeting the ugliest experience that the city has suffered in a long time."

After all this tumult, a call rang forth, in the current modern mode, for—what else?—"dialogue." A group of religious and community leaders, black and Jewish, began meeting in the hope of talking things out. "The evil of bigotry threatens to poison the atmosphere of our city," one of the members declared. Somehow, it came across as if there had been equal bigotry on both sides. Jesse Jackson, when queried about black anti-Semitism, responded that it had been much exaggerated, adding, inevitably, "I don't see anyone holding press conferences condemning Koch." I have listened to tapes of more such "dialogues," including a forum sponsored by the local National Public Radio affiliate where blacks

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in the audience rose to accuse Jews of being responsible for the black drug problem, of creating the black ghetto (Jewish landlords again), and of inventing the problem of black anti-Semitism. To listen to such "dialogue" is to come away believing that black anti-Semitism is even more widespread than one had thought. As always, at the end of these sessions there is the admission that only the surface has been scratched and still more "dialogue" is needed. When one group insults another, and when all the insults are on one side, is more discussion truly what is needed?

That Chicago should be the scene of a public outbreak of black anti-Semitism is in the end perhaps not so surprising. For one thing, with all the political power they have achieved, blacks have been able to do very little to change the kind of life among their fellow blacks that they had claimed was attributable to the absence of political power. Someone else must be to blame, and why not the Jews? For another thing, Chicago is the home of "the two most popular figures in the black community," as Jonathan Kaufman puts it in *Broken Alliance*, "Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan—one the leading political figure, the other the most charismatic—[who] were either overtly anti-Semitic or tied to anti-Semitic statements." With an earlier generation of black leaders, men of the stature of Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, and Bayard Rustin, Jews felt a sense of partnership and trust; they knew where they stood. Thus far Jesse Jackson has given Jews no reason to feel a sense of partnership or trust; and with Louis Farrakhan Jews know all too precisely where they stand. In general there is today a serious crisis in black leadership—or is this yet another subject on which one is not permitted to tell the truth?

What the Steve Cokely incident and its aftermath reveal is how badly shattered is the old implicit alliance between blacks and Jews. Perhaps this alliance always meant more to Jews than to blacks. Owing to historical circumstance, it is the Jews who were summoned—who summoned themselves, really—to aid the blacks: with intellectual talent, with money, with (notably in the South in the 1960's, but hardly there alone) physical courage, and not the blacks who came to the aid of the Jews. No one is calling in debts, but it does seem worth mentioning that, in the old friendship between blacks and Jews and in much else, Martin Luther King, Jr. was not the only one to have his dream. You did not have to be black to have it. It was a beautiful dream, shimmering with light and love and possibility, and waking from it to the reality of a cold dark Chicago morning, one wants to weep.

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Rewriting the Constitution

The Mainstream According to Laurence Tribe

Stanley C. Brubaker

In their response to the nomination of Robert H. Bork to the Supreme Court, the nation's major law schools gave proof, if any were needed, that constitutional jurisprudence in America has been transformed. None of the so-called "extremist" positions for which Bork was pilloried before the Senate Judiciary Committee lacked support from a liberal giant of yesterday, such as Herbert Wechsler, Hugo Black, or Bork's own towering mentor, Alexander Bickel. Yet at Bork's nomination hearings last year, the legal academy passionately and overwhelmingly opposed him. Leading the charge was Laurence Tribe, Tyler Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School.

Contemplating Tribe's career, former Harvard Dean Erwin Griswold has wondered if any legal scholar off the Court "has ever had a greater influence on the development of American constitutional law." Perhaps an overstatement, but at forty-six, Tribe has compiled an impressive record. He has written or edited several books, and scores of influential articles; a leading casebook in constitutional law cites his commentaries nearly fifty times (more than twice the number for Bickel). He has won nine of the twelve cases he has argued before the Supreme Court, most recently a multibillion-dollar victory by Pennzoil over Texaco. He has cultivated smooth relations with the media, becoming their most frequently quoted source on constitutional questions and gaining numerous admiring profiles in return. And he has nurtured his ties to liberal politicians, particularly presidential aspirants.

At the Bork nomination hearings, Tribe weighed in heavily. He devised legal arguments for Democrats on the Judiciary Committee, rehearsed them in marathon sessions with Chairman Joseph Biden, and as lead witness for the Democrats testified against Bork for three hours on national television. Central to his attack was the charge that Bork stood outside the "mainstream" of American constitutional jurisprudence. If the way the subject is taught in law school today is the "mainstream," Bork may indeed be standing in the dried riverbed of yesterday. But if so, we might well ask where the academy's fresh currents would take us. With the recent publication of the second edition of his magnum opus, the 1,778-page *American Constitutional Law*,* Tribe provides a river cruise.

Stanley C. Brubaker teaches government at Colgate University. He has published widely in political-science and law journals, most recently "Can Liberals Punish?" in the *American Political Science Review*.

I

Ten years ago, when *American Constitutional Law* first appeared, Tribe might have seemed an unlikely defender of the constitutional mainstream. In his preface to that edition, he voiced disdain for the "conventional scholarship" then still in the shadow of Alexander Bickel and other advocates of judicial restraint. He urged courts to take a more "candidly creative" role in achieving justice, and denounced the Burger Court ("unduly beholden to the status quo") for its "distressing retreat" from this role.

The notion of writing a "treatise" on constitutional law was itself both bold and ambitious, especially for a professor in his early thirties. It went against the grain of legal texts, which, since the introduction of the case method in the late 19th century, have featured generous excerpts from court opinions followed by brief notes and commentary. Just three treatises of note had been published on constitutional law, and of these, only the *Commentaries* of Joseph Story, published in 1833, had made a serious effort to articulate the philosophy behind the Constitution.

For Story, constitutional meaning was largely fixed. It was the meaning envisioned by the Framers, which was by and large as the Marshall Court—of which Story was a key member—also understood it. In the late 1970's, however, Tribe saw things differently. For him, the Constitution was evolving in a course that was ever more revelatory of an immanent meaning, a meaning unfathomed by the Framers, unbound by the text, and only dimly perceived by the Supreme Court, which had been, nonetheless, haltingly pulled toward it. This, indeed, was why he undertook

* Foundation Press, 1,778 pp., $38.95.

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to write not another mere casebook but a treatise, which, by pointing the direction of evolving doctrine, could provide the foundation for an "openly avowed effort to construct a more just constitutional order." In this new order there would be, he wrote, misappropriating a phrase from the Constitution's Preamble, "a more perfect Union" between constitutional rights and what is truly right.

In the preface to his second edition, Tribe now expresses embarrassment at the "grand tone" of this first preface, and allows that the experience of the last ten years has given him a "deeper appreciation of the very great difference between *reading* the Constitution we have and *writing* the Constitution some of us might wish to have." The words conjure an image of the elder statesman mildly amused by the impetuous energy of his youth; but the reality is more nearly that of the revolutionary consolidating his hold on power. Backed by a legion of law professors come of age in the 1960's, Tribe is now faithfully "reading" the Constitution he "wrote" in the first edition. The course of constitutional meaning that he set ten years ago has become the mainstream he charts today.

The outward organization of Tribe's treatise is no different from conventional casebooks. The two doctrines of separation of powers and federalism are followed by property rights, then by the personal rights of liberty and equality. What is distinctive is the evolutionary significance Tribe gives to this organization. For him, the ideals of liberty and equality were only implied by the doctrines (separation of powers and federalism) prominent from the Founding to the Civil War, and were perversely represented in the property-protective doctrines prominent from the late 19th century to the New Deal. Only with the advent of the Warren Court and the rise of contemporary constitutional commentators did we enter the higher stage of constitutional adjudication. Though the project has occasionally been stymied by benighted conservative appointees, the Court and, more profoundly, the commentators have begun to set forth the deep meaning of equality and liberty (or "autonomy," to use Tribe's preferred term for the latter).

In these ideals of equality and autonomy, the Constitution is said to reveal a vision of human personality. Here, Tribe tells us, we are to find the "elements of being human," the "aspects of self which must be preserved and allowed to flourish." "The judiciary has thus reached into the Constitution's spirit and structure, and has elaborated from the spare text an idea of the 'human' and a conception of 'being' not merely contemplated but required." On this notion of human personality, the entire constitutional scheme must ultimately rest.

Though Tribe's development of this idea is distinctly contemporary, the notion that our constitutional order rests on a vision of what it means to be human is not novel; such notions are often submerged but never absent from serious reflections on government. To gain a clearer sense of what is at stake in Tribe's formulation, however, it is necessary to contrast his idea of human personality with the idea of human personality implied in what we might call, without exaggerating the consensus behind it, the traditional conceptions of liberty and equality as reflected in earlier constitutional jurisprudence.

II

The traditional understanding of liberty under the Constitution builds from two currents of thought, the liberal and the republican. With boldness and lucidity, our Declaration of Independence proclaims the liberal component in holding it self-evident that man is endowed with unalienable rights. Yet as the Declaration itself makes clear, these rights (of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) could be secured by many forms of government, including kingship; for it was not kingship that the document set itself against, but a particular king who had become a tyrant by his denial of rights.

This is where republicanism came in. "No other form" of government, Madison wrote in *The Federalist Papers*, "would be reconcilable with the genius of the people of America; with the fundamental principles of the revolution; or with that honorable determination which animated every votary of freedom to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government." To the Framers, the claim that Americans were capable and worthy of governing themselves was less a matter of inherent rights than of "honorable determination," a standard of public aspiration. (As Irving Kristol once wrote in commenting on this Madisonian view: "There is no inherent right to self-government if it means that such a government is vicious, mean, squalid, and debased.") In a new context and with a distinctive vision, the republican ideal thus echoed the ancient idea of a human *good*.

The confluence of the "republican" ideal of good character and "liberal" doubts about the competence of government to shape that character yielded the once fundamental distinction between liberty and license. The "blessings of liberty," which the Constitution sought to secure, could not be compelled, but the abuse of liberty, or license, could be checked.

Not surprisingly the line between liberty and license in constitutional thought has never been clear or constant, and the idea of proper human character upon which it rests is to some extent always a matter of controversy. But the proposition that a sound constitution of government presupposes a sound constitution of man has, until recently, never raised a serious doubt. And

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while contemporary intellectual currents have eroded confidence in such notions of human character and hence the distinction between liberty and license, they have not erased them from constitutional thought.

Thus, when the Warren Court, in its early years, considered whether obscenity was constitutionally protected speech, its very definition of obscenity implied a hierarchy in the elements of human personality that owed much to the traditional view. Obscenity, the Warren Court held, appealed to a "prurient interest" (defining the latter as a "shameful or morbid interest in sex, nudity, or excretion") and was "patently offensive"—offensive, that is, to sensibilities that are properly respected by government. Obscenity, in short, offends what is high and appeals to what is low in human character; lacking a "redeeming social value," it stands outside of constitutional protection.

The general trend in constitutional thought in recent years has been to wear away this distinction between high and low; it is the goal of Tribe's program to wipe it out entirely. Of no small significance is the change in vocabulary he affects, for while liberty is traditionally understood in opposition to license, Tribe's preferred term, "autonomy," implies no such limit.

An illuminating point of departure here is Tribe's attack on the "continuing suppression of obscenity." During its later years, the Warren Court significantly qualified its earlier definition of legal obscenity by emphasizing that the material in question, in addition to being patently offensive and appealing to a prurient interest, had to be "*utterly*" (the Court italicized for emphasis) "without redeeming social value." But the Burger Court, in another of what Tribe would number among its "distressing retreats," changed this latter criterion to "lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value." To the usual objection that there is no "scientific" proof that pornography has adverse effects, the Court, implicitly invoking the older understanding of human personality, pointed to the "well-nigh universal belief that good books, plays, and art lift the spirit, improve the mind, enrich the human personality and develop character," and asked rhetorically if we cannot logically infer the corollary that obscenity corrupts and debases character.

Tribe responds that the "parallel seems fatally flawed, for the state does not and could not compel its adult citizens, on pain of imprisonment, to read Dante, watch Shakespeare, or listen to Brahms." A nice debater's point, perhaps, but no more. For the major thrust of the distinction between liberty and license is precisely that it is possible and desirable to forbid the abuse of liberty even though its best uses cannot and should not be compelled. That Congress may prohibit its adult citizens from conspiring and inciting riots does not imply that it may force them to compose and recite essays on civic virtue.

In fact, Tribe is less intent on this point than he is in denying, as far as the Constitution is concerned, that there is altogether such a thing as high and low. What inspires *Lear* is equal to what solicits leers. *Hustler*, like *Hamlet*, places an image before the mind, and in that sense makes one aware. To close out such awareness, writes Tribe, is "ultimately incompatible with the First Amendment's premise that awareness can never be deemed harmful in itself." In the last analysis, he continues, "suppression of the obscene persists because it tells us something about ourselves that some of us, at least, would prefer not to know."

In other words, pornography laws are nothing more than a remnant of Victorian "hang-ups" about sex. As Tribe has to admit, the Court has distinguished proscribable pornography from erotic art, yet for him this distinction seems to render its rulings only the more disturbing, since a "selective tolerance for the tastefully salacious, coupled with contempt for the coarsely vulgar" is utterly at odds with a view of the autonomous personality according to which everything is a matter of taste.

From this notion that all images, perceptions, ideas, and other mental stimulations reduce to tastes, with none having a claim above the others, it follows with perfect consistency that government may not inhibit an individual from altering his state of consciousness with marijuana and other more potent psychoactive substances. The ideal of autonomous personality would mean little, it seems, if the individual could not choose to transform "the ways in which the mind processes the sensory data it receives from the world." Choices such as these "constitute an individual's psyche." Thus, for government to suppress the consumption of such drugs and so to limit an individual's control over the processes of his mind is "perhaps the starkest form of governmental invasion of personality."*

If the Constitution must be indifferent to modes of consciousness, at least where there is no immediate harm to others, then too the Constitution must be indifferent to modes

* Tribe is not explicit about what substances he would protect and what not. Marijuana would be protected, but not, it seems, heroin (though why not is unclear). As for the rest, the standard seems to be that the government cannot prohibit any psychoactive substance of equal or lesser potency than the most potent substance it permits. Today alcohol would seem to set the pace. Tribe lays a path for the protection of peyote and its derivative mescaline by noting their importance for the religious automomy of certain Native Americans and by urging the assessment of claims for religious autonomy not from any "objective" perspective but in terms of "the role a belief plays in the individual's or group's life," an assessment which seems tantamount to equating religious autonomy with plain autonomy.

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of intimate association, at least among consenting adults. Though he includes phrases seemingly designed to give him "plausible deniability," Tribe attributes to the Constitution a strong presumption in favor of all consensual sexual associations, which includes, in addition to homosexual sodomy, rights to homosexual marriage and polygamy. Even incestuous relations are "not necessarily" foreclosed from constitutional protection. A state "could perhaps" make a "plausible argument" for banning prostitution, and "at least a colorable argument" against sado-masochism and bondage (since both might involve an excessive risk of coercion), but Tribe withholds judgment on these questions. (He does express doubt that there is a constitutional right to bestiality, but leaves the reader wondering why a Constitution indifferent to the sexual conduct of humans should manifest such solicitude for the sexual propriety of animals.)

The pivotal case for Tribe's program of autonomy is the 1973 decision in *Roe* v. *Wade*, invalidating state anti-abortion laws—for if the claim of autonomy can be made forceful enough to defeat state interest in preserving the life of a fetus, surely it would defeat the more abstract interest of the state in preserving the moral tone of the community. Yet the Court's reasoning in that case is notoriously weak. Its basic point—that the Constitution's protection of liberty "is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy"—is more an assertion than an argument, and is widely regarded as incapable of supporting its immediate result and unsuited for extending the claims of autonomy.

RECOGNIZING this weakness, and well aware of the potential leverage of a solid argument for a constitutional right to an abortion, Tribe has abundantly invested his creative talents in finding one. Indeed, he has devised four distinct justifications since 1973. Initially he claimed that laws prohibiting abortions represented an "establishment" of religion in violation of the First Amendment. A couple of years later, he withdrew from that position, acknowledging that it unduly restrained the political liberty of religious groups and underestimated the moral arguments against abortion that did not derive from specifically religious foundations. Now he claimed instead that when opinion on moral questions is in a state of flux, but the political process is deadlocked by groups committed to the old moral consensus, the judiciary can intervene to allow the evolution of a new moral consensus.

Perhaps sensing that no such consensus could be created by judicial fiat, Tribe barely alluded to this argument in his first edition of *American Constitutional Law*. Rather, he argued there (in his third stab at the issue) that the exceptions in the typical abortion law—such as for rape, incest, or the life of the mother—indicated a less than "coherent commitment" to fetal life when weighed against a woman's claim to autonomy, and thus abortion laws "in the historical circumstances of the 1970's can be perceived as unwarranted deprivations of liberty." In the second edition, this vacant argument too is quietly interred. In its place Tribe offers what is probably his most revealing statement yet on human personality.

This is the antisubjugation principle. Although the Court, and Tribe himself until recently, missed it entirely, it turns out that the essential fault with laws forbidding abortion (and with laws failing to fund them) lies in "the subordination of women to men through the exploitation of pregnancy." Through abortion laws, it seems, and in violation of the Thirteenth Amendment as well as the Fourteenth, "male-dominated society" "sentences" women into "involuntary servitude," or forced labor.

Tribe does not mention that women are more likely than men to oppose abortion; these women apparently suffer false consciousness and have come to wish their own subordination. Nor does he mention that men generally are unaware of having such a malign purpose; like the capitalists described by Marx, men do not intend to exploit, but do so as a result of the "system."

Here the system is biology. Given the burdens of pregnancy and childrearing, women cannot be the equal of men in society unless they are free to terminate a pregnancy. "Even a woman who is not pregnant is inevitably affected by her knowledge of the power relationships thereby created." So when a state bans abortions, refuses to fund them, or weights the choice between childbirth and abortion by funding only the former, it "exploits this special vulnerability of women in a way that reinforces their subordination to men, and thus their lack of fully autonomous and equal roles in social, economic, and political life." By contrast, Tribe muses, "the law nowhere forces *men* to devote their bodies and restructure their lives in those tragic situations (such as organ transplants) where nothing less will permit their children to survive."

That laws concerning organ transplants do not now exist has more to do with the lack of need than with principled opposition. And as it happens, we certainly do ask men to bear significant hardships for the sake of others, as when we draft them for military service and combat duty. Yet Tribe's notion of individual autonomy is such as to *permit* principled and constitutionally based opposition to military service, which by his logic also raises a Thirteenth Amendment issue of involuntary servitude. For how can we allow some to subjugate others to bear the burdens of military service?

By such reasoning do we proceed from the idea that everything is a matter of individual taste to

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radical doubts about the morality of national defense. Nor is the chain of logic altogether surprising, for as Solzhenitsyn has observed, where liberty degenerates into simply "unlimited freedom in the choice of pleasures," it becomes impossible to answer "why and for the sake of what should one risk one's precious life in defense of the common good?"

III

If Tribe's notion of "autonomy" provides the most striking displays of his view of human personality, his conception of equality holds more pervasive and more radical implications for the American political system. Here again we can best understand Tribe's view by contrasting it with the traditional conception, focusing on the issue of racial equality.

According to that traditional view, the basic moral fault of legally imposed discrimination lies in prejudice, that is, in bringing race to bear on judgments of merit, or fitness. There is moral fault in the process, which attributes to race itself a worth it cannot bear, and there is moral fault in the result, which is stigma and, usually, material harm. In the traditional view, judgments of merit can be made only of an individual, not of the racial group to which the individual belongs.

Rules that discriminate on their face, such as a rule denying blacks admission to a state university, are virtually *per se* unconstitutional under this approach. The more difficult problem is with rules or policies that are neutral on their face, but affect the races differently. The traditional approach is to declare such laws unconstitutional if their *purpose* is to discriminate. But where there is no discriminatory purpose, there is no morally objectionable process, no resulting stigma, and no constitutional fault. There may remain a resulting hardship, but it is not different from what each citizen suffers as occasional loser in legislative contests. Thus, when a municipality sells a public swimming pool to a private club, the material effects may be the same, but it makes a world of moral and constitutional difference whether the motives are to preserve scarce public funds or to prevent blacks from mingling with whites.

To be sure, figuring out why a legislature enacted a policy is not always easy. Usually a lawmaker is trying to accomplish several things for many reasons: to pursue sound policy, gain reelection, reward friends, weaken opponents, etc. The traditional approach is to ask whether the legislature had enough legitimate reasons to support passage of the law; or, would the law have passed "but for" racial prejudice? If it seems likely that the law would not have been enacted without such racial prejudice, it is declared unconstitutional. In most cases the matter is clear; in marginal cases it is less so. But in all cases the inquiry is necessary, for the alternative, which is to focus exclusively on material effects and require that all laws affect each racial or ethnic group identically, would result in mandatory color-coding of virtually all governmental policies.

With his newly discovered "antisubjugation principle," Tribe would chart just such an alternative course. Indeed, he first introduces this principle by claiming that it focuses exclusively on a law's effects rather than its purpose; after all, he asserts, "The burden on those who are subjugated is none the lighter because it is imposed inadvertently." Soon enough it emerges that, for Tribe, there is no such category as true inadvertence; rather, from a given "effect" one can always deduce the purpose behind that effect, *whether that purpose is conscious or not.*

According to Tribe, contemporary racism altogether consists less of prejudice, or conscious hostility, than it does of subconscious patterns of thought that render the majority race more concerned for its own well-being than for that of minorities. Thus, in deciding the constitutionality of a law under his antisubjugation principle, he would have courts ask roughly the following question: taking into account the lawmakers' subconscious motives, would they have enacted this law if its disadvantages were to fall on *them* and "their kind"?

This approach, which is not without its charm, operates like a straitjacket: if a lawmaking body is told that it has subconsciously subjugated an individual or a group, how can it respond? Any words it may utter in its defense can be construed as futher evidence of guilt. While courts cannot bring a lawmaker to the psychoanalyst's couch, they can, in Tribe's view, claim a special competence to know his mind. And how will they judge if that mind is pure? By whether the results come out "right."

That the reasoning behind this position is perfectly tautological is the least of its defects. Once we subtract from racial discrimination the idea of prejudice—the judgment that an individual, because of his race, lacks certain desirable human qualities and talents—in what sense does the remaining discrimination present a significant moral or constitutional wrong? At some time or other, each of us is disadvantaged by legislative policy: the tariff that favors manufacturers over farmers, the labor law that favors workers over managers, the airline deregulation that diminishes service to small towns. If we ask Tribe's question—would the lawmakers have enacted a given policy if they came from the same group as the disadvantaged?—then laws that discriminate against racial groups become indistinguishable from laws that disadvantage farmers, managers, and small towns.

As Tribe thus drains the moral force from equal protection, he at the same time vastly extends its reach and the scope of judicial "remedies" for its violation. Where the traditional approach finds

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occasional and discrete acts of racial prejudice by today's lawmakers, Tribe's antisubjugation principle sees institutional racism pervading contemporary America. Indeed, it seems the chief problem with our present racist subconscious is its blind indifference to the way in which apparently neutral policies, rules, and tests perpetuate the "virulent vestige of centuries of official subjugation." Hence Tribe would not hesitate to extend judicial remedies to (what might be thought) the consequences of acts that occurred decades or centuries earlier.

According to Tribe's antisubjugation principle, therefore, all that we have is potentially subject to redistribution, to make it conform to what would have emerged from a hypothetically pure state of mind. To "dismantle this house that racism built," we must create the situation that *would* presumably have occurred *if* we had not discriminated in the past and *if* we did not remain at least subconsciously racist today.

Undaunted by the task of identifying what this doubly hypothetical situation would look like, and untroubled by the expansion of judicial authority required to achieve it, Tribe is most decidedly unimpressed by the cost to individual desert and merit—not to mention social harmony—necessary to obtain his idea of a fair distribution among racial groups. After all, he tells us, the expectations of whites in contemporary America "are likely to be inflated, if not wholly unfounded."

The difference between the traditional approach and Tribe's antisubjugation principle is nicely illustrated in the case of *Washington* v. *Davis* (1976). At issue was "Test 21," used by the District of Columbia police department to evaluate language skills in the selection of recruits. Developed by the Civil Service Commission, the test was widely used by the federal civil service, and was proven to be a reliable measure of success in the police-training program; though it had not been tested in relation to job performance, the job of a policeman does, as the majority opinion pointed out, require, "special ability to communicate orally and in writing." There was no evidence of any purpose to discriminate either in the adoption or in the administration of this test.

Following the traditional approach, the Court held that the relevant constitutional question was one of conscious purpose, not mere effects; the fact that blacks failed the test at a higher rate than whites did not render it unconstitutional.

Not a single Justice in *Washington* v. *Davis* dissented from this statement of constitutional principle. Yet Tribe, commenting on the case in his treatise, claims that the principle of conscious purpose is "utterly alien to the basic concept of equal justice under law." Where the Court looked for prejudice and found none, Tribe looked for and found "legally created or legally reinforced systems of subordination that treat some people as second-class citizens," and conditions which, "in their social and historic context, are manifestations of offical oppression."

"Oppression," "systems of subordination," and "second-class citizenship" might seem extravagant ways to describe a modest endeavor to upgrade the language skills of a police force, more than 40 percent of whose members were black (a figure equivalent to the racial mix in the metropolitan area), whose recruits were more than 50-percent black, and that had, as the majority opinion observed, "systematically and affirmatively sought to enroll black officers." Yet Tribe finds the oppression he is looking for in the District's history of segregated schools, though the segregation had ended twenty years earlier and though the evidence is at best ambiguous that the quality of education and test performance had improved in the intervening years.

With a zeal and singularity of vision more commonly found in ideological tracts than legal treatises, Tribe assesses disparate impacts, such as that resulting from Test 21, as if they *were* aspects of a "system of subjugation." And since, according to Tribe, we must deal with "systems" rather than mere "acts" of discrimination, massive judicial intervention will frequently be needed to counter them.

To root out all traces of "subjugation" in the public schools, for example, Tribe advocates eliminating the well-established distinction between *de-jure* and *de-facto* segregation, a distinction that has been unanimously accepted by the Court. Under Tribe's rule, regardless of whether the state or the local school board had committed any sort of discriminatory act, public schools would be vulnerable to court integration orders until their populations showed the "proper" racial mix—that is, once again, the sort of mix Tribe presumes would have occurred if our past had been what it should have been and if our present subconsciousness did not perpetuate the past. Until then, Tribe maintains, the Constitution must allow federal courts the discretion to formulate system-wide remedies, "remedies as complex, continuing, and wide-ranging as the problem they confront." Racial quotas, busing, redrawing of district lines without regard to neighborhoods or municipal boundaries and redrawing of the lines again if population movements upset the court-established quotas—one searches *American Constitutional Law* in vain for a remedy that Tribe thinks goes too far.

Like school districts, governments themselves would have to be reformed if they failed to produce the proper mix of representatives. Consider how Tribe would have handled *Mobile* v. *Bolden* (1980). In this case, a complaint was brought against the commission form of government adopted by the city of Mobile, with its system of

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at-large election for the three commissioners. The allegation was that this system, which is used by thousands of municipalities across the country, had the effect of "diluting" the black vote.

The district court found no purpose to discriminate in Mobile's form of governance, and no deviation from the principle of one-person-one-vote. Nonetheless, the district judge decided to transform the government to a mayor/council system with single-member districts—this, in order to enhance the chances of electing more black representatives. In his plurality opinon for the Supreme Court reversing this decision, Justice Stewart pointed out that one could speak of vote "dilution" under the circumstances of this case only on the absurd assumption that every minority group "has a federal constitutional right to elect candidates in proportion to its numbers." Tribe, however, praises the lower court's remedy and attacks the Supreme Court reversal of it, and in doing so, he embraces precisely the notion of "vote dilution" the Court rejected.

Tribe, it seems clear, would find constitutional violations of equal protection where the Court has never discovered them before, and extend race-conscious judicial "remedies" far beyond anything the Court has ever sanctioned. This would itself involve discrimination, if of a new kind, namely, against whites. In fact, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with its prohibition of discrimination "against any individual because of his race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" would itself no doubt have to be declared unconstitutional. Where Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of his dream of an America in which each person would be judged not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character, Tribe has fashioned a vision of America where we would all be judged by the color of our skin, and decisively not by the content of our character.

According to the terms of Tribe's antisubjugation principle and by its standards of mental purity, any law that in its effects favors men over women, or women over men for that matter, would almost surely be invalidated. Women's colleges would have to go, unless they could prove that they functioned as a "remedial haven for women from the hierarchy of domination in the 'man's world' of higher education"; men's colleges would not have a prayer. Women equally with men must be eligible for the draft (assuming that it were not declared unconstitutional) and combat duty. Laws with disparate impacts on homosexuals would also fall under this principle, including, one presumes, laws that disfavor the adoption of children by homosexuals. Despite the plain words of the Constitution to the contrary, Tribe maintains that felons equally with the rest of us must have the right to vote; a footnote questions whether it is constitutional even to imprison felons unless society and the criminal can be shown "conclusively" to benefit from such unequal restrictions on liberty. The list goes on.

IV

In short, Tribe's willingness to subordinate the text of the Constitution to an evolving spirit behind it, his identification of that spirit with his own vision of what is truly right, and his eagerness to use judicial authority to implement this vision, combine to leave little in American life that would not be subject to judicial rule or that the people, acting through their elected representatives, would be free to decide. That the Constitution could be silent on any number of questions, that the political branches can render sound judgment on those questions, that the political process enacts the law that courts should use as the basis of their decisions—all this seems to escape him.*

The political branches, under Tribe's approach, forfeit authority to the judiciary because they know less of what is right than does the Court. But as Michael Walzer, whose moral philosophy is not far from Tribe's, but who is far more astute on the nature of authority, has said, the claim of the people to rule "is most persuasively put . . . not in terms of what the people know, but in terms of who they are. They are the subjects of the law, and if the law is to bind them as free men and women, they must also be its makers. . . . They may not know the right thing to do, but they claim a right to do what they think is right."

According to Tribe, even when the Court does not know the right thing to do, the people should recognize its claim to do what it thinks is right. What he finds intolerable is a similar claim to authority by the people themselves.

The "mainstream" thinking preeminently articulated by Tribe is thus carrying us to a place in which there will be no room at all for self-government, and none for constitutional democracy.

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* Thus, even though he has wandered through four different justifications for *Roe* v. *Wade* over the last fifteen years, Tribe has been steadfast in his conviction that abortion is a matter that only the judiciary can decide. It would, he tells us, be intolerable for state legislatures to handle a question of such importance, with some states favoring the rights of the pregnant woman and other states favoring the rights of the fetus. Then, with a better ear for cadence than an eye for historical parallel, he intones "Lincoln's warning, voiced on a previous occasion when the nation was deeply divided over a different issue of fundamental liberty, that the Union could not long endure 'half free and half slave.' " Tribe does not inconvenience his point by mentioning the Court's solution to that issue of liberty, the *Dred Scott* decision, by all accounts the worst it has ever rendered.

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Agnon's Antagonisms

Cynthia Ozick

SHMUEL YOSEF AGNON, the 1966 Nobel winner for literature, was born one hundred years ago, in Galicia, Poland, and died in Jerusalem in 1970. Not long after his death, I wrote a story about Agnon, a kind of parable that meant to toy with the overweening scramble of writers for reputation and the halo of renown. It was called "Usurpation" and never mentioned Agnon by name. Instead, I pretended he was still alive, not yet a laureate: "It happens that there lives in Jerusalem a writer who one day will win the most immense literary prize on the planet." I referred to this writer as "the old man," or else as "the old writer of Jerusalem"—but all the while it was Agnon I not-so-secretly had in mind; and I even included in my story, as a solid and unmistakable clue, one of his shorter fables: about why the messiah tarries.

To tell the truth, this midrashic brevity (God knows where I came upon it) was the only work of Agnon's I had ever read. Nothing could have tempted me to look more extensively into Agnon, not even the invention of a story about him: though I was enchanted by the dazzlements his great name gave off, my story was nevertheless substantially blind to the illuminations of his pen.

I could hardly blame myself for this. For decades, Agnon scholars (and Agnon is a literary industry) have insisted that it is no use trying to get at Agnon in any language other than the original. The idea of Agnon in translation has been repeatedly disparaged; he has been declared inaccessible to the uninitiated even beyond the usual truisms concerning the practical difficulties of translation. His scriptural and talmudic resonances and nuances, his historical and textual layers, his allusive and elusive echoings and patternings, are so marvelously multiform, dense, and imbricated that he is daunting even to the most sophisticated Hebrew readers.

What, then, can a poor non-Hebraist possibly make of an Agnonic masterwork when, willy-nilly, it is stripped of a quarter or a half of its texture and its substance, when the brilliant leaves are shaken off the spare, bare, naked-toed trunk? A writer in monolingual America, confined to writing and reading wholly in English, will clearly have no Agnon other than the Agnon who has been Englished. If the prodigal Agnon can be present only in Hebrew, to read him in any other tongue is to be condemned to paucity. The Hebrew prince is an English-language pauper.

So, drawn almost exclusively to the lustiness of literary blue blood, unwilling to see it ransacked and pauperized, I have kept my distance from the translated Agnon.

But Agnon himself has a different idea of translation and its possibilities. The anecdote that illustrates Agnon's position is consummately sly—a sort of play, or paradigm, or Oscar Wildean joke. Saul Bellow tells the joke on himself in his introduction to *Great Jewish Short Stories*, a popular paperback anthology he edited in 1963, some years before either writer had captured the Nobel Prize.

> In Jerusalem several years ago [Bellow recounts], I had an amusing and enlightening conversation with the dean of Hebrew writers, S.Y. Agnon. This spare old man, whose face has a remarkably youthful color, received me in his house, not far from the barbed-wire entanglements that divide the city, and while we were drinking tea, he asked me if any of my books had been translated into Hebrew. If they had not been, I had better see to it immediately, because, he said, they would survive only in the Holy Tongue. His advice I assume was only half serious. This was his witty way of calling my attention to a curious situation. I cited Heinrich Heine as an example of a poet who had done rather well in German. "Ah," said Mr. Agnon, "We have him beautifully translated into Hebrew. He is safe."

Now the "curious situation" Bellow alludes to is the fact (as he comments a moment later) that

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CYNTHIA OZICK's books include *Bloodshed and Three Novellas*, *Art and Ardor*, *The Cannibal Galaxy*, and, most recently, *The Messiah of Stockholm*. Her new collection of essays, *Metaphor & Memory*, will be published next spring by Alfred A. Knopf. The present essay is a revised version of a paper Miss Ozick delivered at a conference held this past June at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to commemorate the one hundredth birthday of S.Y. Agnon.

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"Jews have been writing in languages other than Hebrew for two thousand years." No one could have been more aware of this variety of language-experience than Agnon—which is why Bellow understood Agnon's remark to be "only half serious."

But there are two entirely serious elements to take note of in Agnon's response. The first is his apparent confidence in the power of "beautiful translation." A case can be made that Heine, too, with all *his* strata of sources, from medieval ballads to chivalric romances to French satire, will not readily yield to successful translation—perhaps even less so than Agnon, because a poet is always more resistant to translation than a writer of prose, however complex the prose. And yet Agnon does not doubt that "we have him," that Heine can be genuinely Heine even in a language as distant from German, and as alien to European literary styles, as Hebrew.

All the same, it is not the translator's skill, much as Agnon seems willing to trust in it, that preserves Heine for Agnon. It is Heine's "return," so to speak, as a Jewish poet, to the sacred precincts of the Land of Israel—his return via the Holy Tongue. For Agnon it may be that Heine in German is less fully Heine than he is in Hebrew: to be "safe" is to have entered into the influences of holiness; redemption is signified by the reversal of exile. Whatever happens outside the Land of Israel, whatever ensues in the other languages of the earth, is, to be sure, saturated in its own belongingness, and may indeed be alluring, and without question "counts" in the world of phenomena; but counts differently, because it is outside the historic circle of redemption that only the Land possesses. The world beyond the Land, however gratifying or seductive, is flavored with the flavor of exile.

At first glance Agnon's witticism, "he is safe," appears to be in praise of translation as a relatively easy triumph of possibility—but only, it seems, if the text in question is drawn from the tongues of exile into the redemptiveness of Hebrew. Presumably, translation *out* of Hebrew would be considered not so much a linguistic as a metaphysical lessening. Or else, since the original continues to stand, Agnon Englished would strike Agnon as irrelevant. The calculated remark, "he is safe," is a joke that recognizes, after all, the chanciness of translation, that in fact *not* all translation "saves"; and it is this contradiction that makes the joke, since the redemptiveness of translation can work in one direction only. A flawed rendering of Heine into Hebrew may nevertheless partake of redemption; a brilliant rendering of Agnon into English backslides into the perilous flavor of exile.

And that is the second serious point. When you reverse the direction—when translation becomes *yeridah* (descent from the heights of Jerusalem; desertion) rather than *aliyah* (ascent to the sublime; return)—the witticism collapses, a different tone takes hold, and a chink opens into dread, into the regions of the unsafe, of the irrational, into the dark places of alien myth, of luring mermaid and moon-dazed mountain nymph, of Pan and unbridled Eros. The Lorelei will chant her deadly strains out of the bosom of the Rhine, but never out of Lake Kinneret (the Hebrew name for the Sea of Galilee). And Saul Bellow's domesticated metaphysical anecdote—Agnon drinking tea and speculating about Heine's salvation—becomes a parable that, when set to run in reverse, can turn into a tale of baleful exilic potency.

Imagine, for instance, that it is not the Land of Israel that is the magnet, but all the lands beyond. Imagine that the longing of heroic temperaments is for exile rather than for redemption. Imagine everything seen upside down and inside out: a yearning for abroad instead of for Jerusalem; a pilgrimage in search of holy talismans that leads away from the Land toward half-pagan scenes. Imagine a sacred tongue that is not Hebrew. Imagine an Exodus undertaken for the sake of returning to the wilderness. Imagine trading the majestic hymns of Scripture for wild incantations and magical ululations. Imagine the Land of Israel as a site of drought and dearth and death and crumbling parapets and squatters and muteness, while faraway countries flow with rivers and songs and color and grace and beauty and joy.

All these ominous reversals of "he is safe," Agnon has made; he has made them in a work of fiction. If the Land of Israel assures immortality for Jewish poets, the corollary must be that exile can shore up only the short term, the brief lease, until the final slide into oblivion. But what of the opposite proposition? The proposition that the old, old myths, the legends that precede Sinai by a millennium and more, the fables that continue to girdle and enthrall the world, will outlive all? The proposition that compared to the loud song of the Lorelei, out of whose strong throat beat the hypnotic wing-whirrs of a hundred birds, the biblical Hannah's murmured prayer—unaesthetic, humble, almost not there—falls into insignificance?

Such a proposition may be an unlikely meditation for the pen of the "old writer of Jerusalem," "the dean of Hebrew writers," who in 1950, when he delivered up the tale called "Edo and Enam,"* had reached the lively age of sixty-two; sixteen years later we see him flying to Sweden, exultant in a *yarmulke*. Does the pious *yarmulke* contradict the tale? The tale may be said to hang on the case of the translation into Hebrew of a pair of newly-discovered ancient languages; and yet no redemption will come of it. Heine's "*Die Lorelei*," a song about death through allurement, is transmuted

* "Edo and Enam," together with a second novella, "Betrothal," is available in English (*Two Tales*, translated by Walter Lever, Schocken Books).

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into a Hebrew ballad, and is thereby deemed "safe." But the Enamite Hymns carry, and carry out, the real power of death by allurement: they are all peril. Transported to the Land of Israel they have the capacity to kill, though they too are "beautifully translated" into the Holy Tongue.

Their devoted translator in the story is Dr. Ginath, a scholar without a *yarmulke*, a wholly secularized scientific philologist and ethnographer, who will go to any length to get hold of lost languages: once, for example, he posed as a mystical holy man from Jerusalem, "Hacham Gideon," in order to pry out the secret tongue of the living vestige of the tribe of Gad. "These days," remarks the narrator of "Edo and Enam," "it is as if the earth had opened up and brought forth all that the first ages of man stored away. Has not Ginath discovered things that were concealed for thousands of years, the Edo language and the Enamite Hymns?" Dr. Ginath is the author of "Ninety-nine Words of the Edo Language," and also of an Edo grammar, but

> the Enamite Hymns were more: they were not only a new-found link in a chain that bound the beginnings of recorded history to the ages before, but—in themselves—splendid and incisive poetry. Not for nothing, then, did the greatest scholars come to grips with them, and those who at first had doubted that they were authentic Enamite texts began to compose commentaries on them. One thing, however, surprised. . . . All these scholars affirmed that the gods of Enam and their priests were male; how was it that they did not catch in the hymns the cadence of a woman's song?

"I could hear," continues the narrator, "a kind of echo from my very depths . . .; ever since the day I had first read the Enamite Hymns that echo had resounded. It was a reverberation of a primal song passed on from the first hour of history through endless generations."

That "cadence of a woman's song" belongs to the autochthonous enchantresses, among them the Lorelei; it is the voice of the intoxicated sibyls who speak for what we may call the First Religion, which is the poetry of Eros and nature, of dryad and nymph and oread, of the sacred maidens whose insubstantial temples are the sea, the rivers, the forests, the meadows, and the hills. In "Edo and Enam," Agnon experiments with importing the hymns of this First Religion into the Land of Israel, into the marrow of Jerusalem itself, where such hymns cannot flourish, where they will grow lethal; and he also imports the singer of the hymns, the enchantress Gemulah, who, when she sang in her native realm, "stirred the heart like . . . the bird Grofith, whose song is sweeter than that of any creature on earth."

GEMULAH is from a distant mountainous region, though her people originally lived among springs. According to their tradition, they derive from the tribe of Gad, which in the Bible once received a blessing of "enlargement." As warriors, they "advanced into the lands of the Gentiles, for they misconceived the text" of the blessing—"they did not know that the blessing refers only to the time when they lived in the Land of Israel, not to their exile in the lands of other peoples." But it is exile itself they have misconceived; they take it for eternity, and have succumbed to the First Religion.

While at least formally they maintain their ancestral hope for the return to Jerusalem, and while Gemulah's father, a learned elder of the tribe, is still able to read to the people from the Midrash and the Jerusalem Targum, "which they have in its complete text, and which he translated into their language," the Gadites are by now profoundly separated. Their speech is unlike any other. In fulfillment of their name, Gad, or Luck, they depend on the stars and deal in charms and talismans and magical texts. Though they continue to circumcise their sons, their alien funeral rites are observed "with songs and dances full of dread and wonder." Gemulah herself is "accomplished in all their songs, those that they had once sung . . . by the springs and also those of the mountains." Gemulah's father hands on to her a "secret knowledge laid up by his ancestors," as well as an arcane private language, an antic invention that separates the two of them even from Gad itself; they are a pair of oracles and sorcerers.

In order to "learn from the eagles how they renew their youth," Gemulah's father ascends into the mountains, where he is attacked and devoured by an eagle. Following a long mourning, Gemulah will be taken by her bridegroom to the Land of Israel, to the city of Jerusalem, where she will sicken and fall mute. The First Religion, woven out of filaments of purest nature poetry, is silenced in the domain of monotheism.

A dumbstruck Lorelei, a somnambulist who "walks wherever the moon leads her," like a mermaid drawn by the tides, Gemulah will at last become equal to the letters of her name when their positions are set free to recombine: a female golem. And indeed at the tale's opening we are privy to some banter about just such a creature—"Wasn't it you who said Dr. Ginath had created a girl for himself?"—and we hear the name of Solomon Ibn Gabirol invoked, the Hebrew poet of medieval Spain who is said to have carpentered a woman out of wood.

Gemulah's bridegroom is Gavriel Gamzu, a man in a *yarmulke*, a dealer in rare books and manuscripts. He began as an ordinary yeshiva student, but discovered himself in thrall to "intrinsic beauty," hence to poetry. In youth once, intending to purchase a copy of the *Shulkhan Arukh*, the major compendium of religious laws, he emptied his pockets instead for the sake of an exotic *divan* of pure verse. "Because he was so fastened to poetry, he came unfastened at the

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yeshiva," and was driven to wander the world in search of the ravishments of anonymous hymns. The lure of primeval song has brought him to Gemulah's country. A sandstorm in that region, however, leaves him blind in one eye, perhaps as a divine judgment for preferring intrinsic beauty to the discipline of the codes of conduct.

From now on Gamzu's vision is halved, strangely narrowed. Wearing his *yarmulke*, he lectures against "read[ing] the Law beyond the text," and keeps a stern eye out for "those Bible critics who turn the words of the living God upside down"; but the next instant this one and only eye abandons piety and fixes on the holiness of poets, whose "hallowed hands" have the power to save from the demons of hell. It appears that intrinsic beauty and the Law cannot rest together in peace within the range of a single eye, and may not wed and live together under a roof in Jerusalem. The bewitchment-seeking spirit of Gavriel Gamzu is for the moment more at home away from home, in the lands of exile. Only there do enchantments thrive unrestrained.

Consequently Gamzu's pursuit of rapture can be fulfilled only outside the Land of Israel, in separated communities compromised by long periods of exile. If the uncanniness of Gemulah's song electrifies him into seizing her as his bride, it is not Gadite poetry alone that stirs Gamzu. In his incessant travels he has happened on other deposits of wondrous lyricism—for instance, exilic Jews whose forefathers in the time of the First Temple were young men driven from Jerusalem by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar. Riding on millstones, they were carried aloft to their rescue in the isolation of a mysterious new settlement, where "they saw maidens coming up from the sea," and married them; and not long afterward they "forgot Jerusalem." When the priestly scribe Ezra subsequently summoned them to be restored to the Land of Israel, they hung back. Like the Gadites, they mistook exile for permanence. This lost society, the children of mermaids, has developed rites and songs over the generations that deviate signally from the practices of Israel. The close presence of women in their synagogue and the singing of unfamiliar hymns of startling sweetness derive, no doubt, from the habits of their ancestresses the sea-maidens.

In delineating these legendary distant tribes sunk in attrition and dilution, can Agnon have had in mind the real precedent of the Jews of Elephantine? A community founded on an island in the Nile by Jewish mercenaries under Persian governance, even after Ezra's return to Jerusalem in the 5th century B.C.E., they defied the ban on multiple temples and insisted on erecting a separate and rival edifice. The Elephantine Papyri testify to the strong position of women among them: bridegrooms had to provide dowries, for example. But the statuary that crept into their temple architecture, and the customs that invaded their practice, including the outright worship of goddesses, severely divided the Elephantinians from the Jewish mainstream, and they disappeared into the belly of exile, leaving behind a mere archeological vapor. In "Edo and Enam," Agnon condenses the vapor of wayward paganized Jews into the honeyed elixir of Gamzu's hymns—but when the hymns are introduced into the place where the Temple once stood, havoc rules, and Jerusalem begins to unbuild.

Consider the condition of Jerusalem when Gamzu brings into the city his wife Gemulah and her father's talismans—mystical leaves, at first sight colorful, then drained of color, on which certain charms are inscribed. These leaves, long buried in a jar in a cave beneath a mountain crag in Gemulah's country, were given to Gamzu by Gemulah's father; they have the power to retrieve her when she escapes to sleepwalk under a full moon, a malady that occurs chiefly when she is away from her native surroundings.

When the charms, in the company of the now ailing Gemulah, settle into Jerusalem, their influence sets off a rash of departures, a rush back down into exile, an explosion of *yeridah*, signifying a descent from lawful holiness. The narrator's wife and children have left Jerusalem for another town; we are not told why. Gerda and Gerhard Greifenbach, who rent part of their house to the scholarly Dr. Ginath, are yearning for foreign lands, and are about to go on a tour. They are described as "dark and distracted," restless and discontent; it is likely that they suffer from the exilic emanations of the two mystical leaves in their possession, gifts from the itinerant Dr. Ginath—perhaps he found them in a bundle of manuscripts purchased from Gamzu, or perhaps he obtained them in Gemulah's country while impersonating Gideon, the Jerusalem Hacham. The Greifenbachs' house is itself tainted by exilic flaws. It was once inhabited by a quarrelsome sectarian from Germany, who ended by abandoning Jerusalem; and again by a couple named Gnadenbrod: the wife refused to live in Jerusalem, and they reentered exile in Glasgow—immediately after which an earthquake undermined the house and permanently weakened the roof.

Gemulah's presence insinuates exile into the everyday life of Jerusalem, if exile is understood to mean deterioration, peril, and loss. The water supply dries up in tanks, pipes, and taps. Angry Arabs appear out of nowhere to stab young lovers. The city is overrun with housebreakers and squatters. In the general homelessness, newlyweds find it impossible to live together under one roof. All this happens when Gemulah is loosed from her sickbed into Jerusalem, somnambulant, released from muteness only to sing her magical song, *yiddal, yiddal, yiddal, yah, pah, mah*. The body of the city is there, but only as a shell: the spirit of peace is gone from it. Jerusalem itself becomes a

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kind of golem—which may account for the prevalence of the letter "g"—*gimel*—in all the names of the tale, Gemulah's among them, since *gimel* too is an anagram for golem.

In the last scenes we see Gamzu himself turned into a golem at the sound of Gemulah's private language, the language belonging only to herself and her sorcerer father. When Gamzu first heard Gemulah's voice, on a mountaintop in her own country, he was entranced: Gemulah stood before him as "one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, and none other than the constellation Virgo"—an oracle, one of the minor divinities of the First Religion, an enchantress, an alien nymph displaced. Now, in a manner reminiscent of the mystical leaves that initially showed brilliant colors and then grew brown as earth, "suddenly the colors began to change in Gamzu's face, until at last all color left it, and there remained only a pale cast that gradually darkened, leaving his features like formless clay."

It is displacement that governs the imaginings of "Edo and Enam." Displacement—the grim principle of exile—is what distinguishes Agnon's fictive commentary on the First Religion from, say, the visionary work of the Sicilian Giuseppe di Lampedusa or the Swedish Pär Lagerkvist, each of whom has written a remarkable modernist novella on the subject of the primal enchantress—or, perhaps, on the theme of ecstatic beauty.

Lampedusa's enchantress in "The Professor and the Mermaid" is Lighea, "daughter of Calliope," a siren who appears to a student of ancient Greek and couples with him, hoping to lure him to oblivion. Like her mother the muse of poetry, in the name of rapture she urges the erasure of all distinctions: "ignorant of all culture, unaware of all wisdom, contemptuous of any moral inhibitions, she belonged, even so, to the fountainhead of all culture, of all wisdom, of all ethics, and could express this primigenial superiority of hers in terms of rugged beauty. 'I am everything [she chants] because I am simply the current of life, with its detail eliminated.' "

Lagerkvist's parable, "The Sibyl," has a Christian lining, and offers a darker view of the ecstatic: all the same, the oracle's power of annihilation (and self-annihilation) is unmistakable, and her utterances in the pit at the temple of Delphi are, like Gemulah's, in a recondite tongue never before heard by mortal ears:

> I began to hiss forth dreadful, anguished sounds, utterly strange to me, and my lips moved without my will; it was not I who was doing this. And I heard shrieks, loud shrieks; I didn't understand them, they were quite unintelligible, yet it was I who uttered them. They issued from my gaping mouth. . . . Not long afterward it happened that I was carried out of the oracle pit unconscious, violated by [the] god . . . my ecstasy, my frenzy, was measureless. . . . I smelled a sour stench of goat; and the god in the shape of the black goat, his sacred beast in the cave of the oracle, threw itself upon me and assuaged itself and me in a love act in which pain, evil, and voluptuousness were mingled.

The siren and the sibyl, potent representatives of the First Religion, swallow up all things—every achievement, every desire, every idea—into the poetry of ecstatic obliteration, Eros joined with degradation and death. Gemulah's bewitchment of Gamzu is no different, though Agnon's voice, like Gemulah's, is airier:

> Because songs are conjoined, they are linked up with one another, the songs of the springs with the songs of high mountains, and those of high mountains with the songs of the birds of the air. And among these birds there is one whose name is Grofith; when its hour comes to leave the world, it looks up to the clouds and raises its voice in song; and when its song is ended, it departs from the world. All these songs are linked together in the language of Gemulah. Had she uttered that song of Grofith, her soul would have departed from her, and she would have died.

Yet finally Gamzu opposes Gemulah's sorcery in a way imagination would never dream of opposing the siren's song or the oracle's cry. Who, in the gossamer realms of the First Religion, which knows nothing of exile, and where all the world is home to all divinities, would dare to stop the mouths of Delphic sibyls or glittering mermaids? But Gamzu puts his hand over Gemulah's mouth to save her from singing the notes of Grofith, the poetry of ecstatic frenzy, which can kill. It is the hand of anti-myth.

And still Gemulah dies. She dies for magic, for voluptuous longing, for ecstasy; she dies singing the song of the bird Grofith after all, bidden to do so by Dr. Ginath, whom she mistakes for the Jerusalem Hacham, the magus who once sojourned in her country. As an act of science, the philologist Ginath transcribes the strange syllables of her mysterious language; but Gemulah has no science; she is the antithesis of science. Spellbound under the moon, she walks on the roof of Ginath's part of the Greifenbachs' house—the very roof weakened long ago by an earthquake that came as a judgment upon those who abandon Jerusalem to run after exile. Ginath pursues her, and together they fall to their deaths.

Scanning the obituary notices in the newspaper, the narrator happens on a curious misprint: the announcement of the death of a Dr. Gilath. The letter "l" has been substituted for the letter "n." Agnon's Hebrew readers can readily guess the reason. "Ginath" (which means "garden") suggests the bower of esoteric knowledge, the fatal *pardes* ("paradise") into which, according to legend, four scholars, all prodigious and original,

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ventured; only one of them, Rabbi Akiva, came out alive—perhaps because he more than the others revered the Law. And "Gilath"? Omitting the vowels, the root-consonants spell out the letters of *galuth*: Hebrew for exile, displacement.

Gemulah is in exile from her country of charms and talismans and conjury and divination and necromantic hymn; Jerusalem, the city of the Law, is inimical to all of these. In her native land, Gemulah blooms unharnessed, under the mild rule of poetry and play and random rapture. But in Jerusalem wizards and their hymns weaken and perish; so Gemulah sickens, and takes to her bed spiritless and speechless; it is well-known that a golem lacks the capacity for speech. When the moon calls her, she rises up to meander through Jerusalem, infiltrating her omens and influences through the city, and then Jerusalem too sickens with the sickness of exilic ailments: dread and dryness and departure.

But as soon as Gemulah is destroyed, disordered and disconsolate Jerusalem comes to healthy life again: the water begins to flow freely in the pipes, the exiles stream home, *yeridah* gives way to *aliyah*—the narrator's family returns, the Greifenbachs hurry back from abroad, nothing more is heard of housebreakers, squatters, marauders, or separated couples. The First Religion is routed, and Jerusalem is restored.

How is it, though, that Gemulah's husband Gamzu escapes death? Like Ginath, who is punished for flying after the enticements of the languages of exile, Gamzu has been an enamored soul possessed by the music of the First Religion; and yet Gamzu lives. Like Akiva, he survives the penetration into *pardes*. Gamzu is safe—ultimately he can keep his eye, his only eye, on Jerusalem's principle of Law; he wears his *yarmulke*, and has the power to stop up Gemulah's mouth, so that (at least temporarily) she will not lose herself in the song of the deadly bird of beauty. Only in the regions beyond Jerusalem is he powerless before savage beauty.

THE principle of Jerusalem versus the principle of exile; *aliyah* versus *yeridah*; redemption versus illusion; seeking to be "safe" versus finding oneself swallowed up by the forces of obliteration. A fugue of antagonisms. One cannot even be sure of Agnon's definitive passion, whether he leans finally to the side of lyrical sorcery or of Torah. Near the close of "Edo and Enam," the narrator learns that Dr. Ginath has burned all his papers, among them the record of Gemulah's inchoate utterances. Jerusalem, it would seem, has won over the wilderness. But in the very last sentences of the tale, the Enamite Hymns are lauded for their "grace and beauty," and Dr. Ginath is celebrated for saving them for the world: is this jubilant praise rendered in the narrator's voice or in Agnon's own? And in the end how do we know whether Jerusalem itself is really safe, even after the destruction of the enchantress Gemulah? Heine's Lorelei, after all, now sings in the Holy Tongue, the better to sabotage the citizens of Jerusalem.

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The Forecasting Game

A Story

Felicia Ackerman

SQUINTING against the sun that was defying her forecast, Charlotte tiptoed into the hospital room just in time to hear the social worker, seated with her back to the door, say to Charlotte's mother, "Hospice care could keep you comfortable and give you personalized attention."

"And all I'd have to do in return is be willing to die just a trifle sooner than necessary," Charlotte's mother said, lifting her chin in a secret greeting as Charlotte's thick fingers made donkey ears behind the social worker's head.

"It's the quality of life," said the social worker. "You wouldn't have to worry about being dependent on machines." Her springy red-gold hair sparkled in the sunlight. Unfair for such vividness to come with such a sappy mind, or was it overwhelmingly fair, a sort of compensation? Charlotte wondered.

Charlotte's mother was emaciated and eighty, twice Charlotte's age and scarcely half her weight. She pushed herself up against the pillows and asked the social worker, "How did you get to the hospital today?"

"What? I drove."

"Do *you* worry about being dependent on machines?" Charlotte's mother said, lifting her chin again. "Charlotte, dear, please tell this lovely young woman I'm not quite so eager to croak as healthy young people think I should be, and if this hospital ever pulls the plug on me, you'll sue the pants off it."

"My mother is not quite so eager to croak as healthy young people think she should be, and if this hospital ever pulls the plug on her, I'll sue the pants off it," Charlotte said pleasantly, stepping over to the bedside.

The social worker said no one had any intention of violating their wishes, she was only trying to find out what they were, and asked if Charlotte was an attorney.

"She's a philosophy professor who likes to think she's a meteorologist, but she knows plenty of lawyers." Charlotte's mother pushed her silver-rimmed glasses up the bridge of her nose. "And now may we be alone, please?"

Getting up to leave, the social worker said how wonderful it was that Charlotte visited her mother every day.

"My mother is one of the two most interesting people I know," Charlotte said, settling her hundred and eighty pounds in the vacated chair, "and the other one doesn't have this much time for me."

"And where would I be without such birdbrains to keep me on my toes?" Charlotte's mother said as soon as the social worker was out of earshot, or possibly a bit before. "And speaking of birdbrains, dear, take a peek at this." She handed Charlotte a magazine opened to an article titled "How Accepting My Mother's Dying Helped Me Grow." The article was part of a series titled "Real-Life Drama." "Charlotte, dear," said her mother, "promise me you will never use my . . . illness as a spiritual stepladder. Or any other kind of stepladder," she added, and Charlotte promised, her eyes filling as if the cold front of her forecast were passing through her head.

A moment later, Charlotte's mother was telling her to stop crying. "I'm going to walk out of here, you know. So why don't you talk about that Republican you seem so enamored of? I still can't figure out how I raised a daughter who could fall in love with a Republican."

Charlotte nodded and, since they were no longer on the subject of her mother's illness, permitted herself a glance at the sky. The sun had slipped behind a cloud, but it was too late. The temperature was already in the 60's. Charlotte's maximum had been 58. She prided herself on exact predictions. She hated forecasts that hedged by saying things like "High around 60, chance of precipitation." "Look," she said, "if I can tell myself he's secretly in love with me, telling myself he's not really a Republican is a piece of cake."

"What kind of cake?"

"Chocolate, of course, with chocolate frosting."

"I do believe I'm going to walk out of here. I merely have anemia; that's why I'm in this delightful place," said Charlotte's mother, who had chronic leukemia that had stopped responding to treatment. "It's called the denial mechanism. I call it the greatest thing since the wheel."

FELICIA ACKERMAN, a new contributor, is associate professor of philosophy at Brown University. Her stories have appeared in a variety of periodicals, including *Moment* and *Playgirl*.

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Charlotte swallowed hard and touched her mother's cheek. "Anything anyone does to make his life easier is a psychiatric symptom nowadays," she said thickly, and then in answer to her mother's, "Indulge yourself, dear, and go on about Dale," reminded her that Dale had decided to register as a Republican partly because he'd been asked, "Democrat or Independent?" by someone handing out leaflets on his campus. Dale taught the weather-forecasting course Charlotte drove across the city to twice weekly, since the state college where she taught philosophy had no meteorology department. "He does like talking with me, I'm sure," she said, "well, pretty sure." The older and fatter she got, the harder Charlotte found it to gauge her effect on people. Could being interesting make up for what she looked like? How interesting was she, anyway? Dale talked with her about all sorts of things, laughed at her jokes as well as at many remarks she didn't intend as funny, and was always telling her what exciting and unusual ideas she had. But maybe it was just advanced politeness. He was nice to everyone. Charlotte had gotten into the habit of imagining people in the forecasting course as weather elements, and Dale, she had said to her mother the previous week, was the sun, radiating warmth and light on everyone, when you wanted the warmth and light to be only for you. "Do you want the sun to shine only on you, dear?" Charlotte's mother had asked, and Charlotte had giggled, saying, "At this point, the analogy breaks down," but adding that, of course, possessiveness was part of love. You just had to be ready to give as much exclusive attention and loyalty as you'd demand. Now she leaned forward in her seat and said she felt like screaming when she heard people gush about Dale's niceness, as if being an overprivileged hotshot with an international reputation for your research meant you deserved special credit for being nice, and besides, nice wasn't the same as good. "I mean, I probably don't even cross his mind as a romantic possibility because I'm ten years older and twenty or thirty pounds heavier, and if that's true, it shows he's crummy deep inside, doesn't it?"

"Yes, dear," said Charlotte's mother as obligingly as if they had never had this conversation before, "but so are plenty of people, and you live in a nasty world, just in case you haven't noticed. And I noticed the world gave you a little surprise today," she went on, gesturing toward the window, "and I'm going to give you another one. I have a chance to be in a clinical trial."

"You do?" Charlotte sat up straighter while her mother explained about the new, experimental treatment. "Evidently this place isn't very well coordinated, or that charming social worker wouldn't have come by today to offer me a golden opportunity to bow out gracefully before I can become even more of a burden," her mother ended.

Charlotte's mind barely grazed the surface of her usual thought about a sick person who would rather die than be a burden to his family. Either the family didn't want him to die, so he wouldn't be doing them any favors, or they did, so why should he give a damn about them? "How effective is the experimental treatment?" she asked. She did not ask, How safe? She already knew the answer. Safer than the alternative.

"That, my dear, is what they're trying to find out. Would you believe Dr. Ketchum actually assured me that in any case I would be making a contribution to medical research?"

"I hope you replied that expecting you to think about contributing to humanity at this point is like asking the starving to give to charity."

Her mother smiled. "Remember that documentary about the psychiatrist?"

Charlotte nodded. Two weeks earlier, there had been a television program about a psychiatrist who was training children with terminal cancer to counsel each other. "He made me see I was unhappy because I wasn't helping anyone," a photogenically frail twelve-year-old boy had said earnestly into the camera, and the next day, Charlotte's mother had raged to a sympathetic Charlotte that the poor kid wasn't even allowed to be unhappy simply because he was dying, for heaven's sake. He had to be unhappy because he wasn't *helping* anyone. But Charlotte didn't want to go into that now. "Exactly what did Ketchum say about your chances with this new treatment?" she asked.

"The treatment is very experimental, and no one can predict the future." Charlotte's mother was mimicking a British accent. "I told him to try telling that to my daughter the meteorologist."

"Well, you know what Dale says," said Charlotte. "Everybody has to play the forecasting game."

"WHY is it called a game?" Charlotte was asking Dale in the weather laboratory the following week. She gestured at the posted list labeled "Forecasting Game" that placed her third of nineteen people scored on the accuracy of their forecasts. Everyone in the class was on the list; everyone had to turn in two forecasts a week. That was playing the forecasting game. It was, Dale had told her, how most weather-forecasting courses were run. "If a hospital ranked surgeons on how many lives they saved a week and posted the results, would that make it a game?" Charlotte continued. She ran her fingers through her hair and added, "Philosophers spend hours discussing that kind of stuff. It's conceptual analysis. And it never gets resolved. That's the great thing about weather forecasting: you're guaranteed results every day, and you can stick your head out the window and see for yourself how well you did. It doesn't matter what the biggest hotshot in the world says." Dale laughed, the laugh she loved, unusually loud and lively for an adult.

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Charlotte glanced out the plate-glass window. Starting out clear, then becoming cloudy later, she had predicted two days before, and the world was cooperating. So far. She turned back to Dale, liking his appearance because it looked as if he cared little about it, which might mean he wasn't crummy, after all, and cared little about other people's appearance, too. He was a trifle dumpy and always wore rumpled pants with a nondescript jacket. Even his longish hair and beard, which on most professors Charlotte would have considered signs of academic trendiness, appealed to her because they weren't what you'd expect of someone who would register as a Republican. They showed his politics weren't just part of his outfit. She could hardly look at him without smiling, and now she could feel her face growing hot and red as the morning's sunrise. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning. Dr. Ketchum had given a warning, Don't expect miracles; but what would she do without the denial mechanism, greatest thing since the wheel? Surely not stand here happily, with no immediate worries beyond whether she could get up the willpower to end this conversation herself, so she could imagine that Dale, who in fact often talked with her for much of the hour until the class, would today feel deprived by the loss.

And even this problem was getting solved, temporarily at least, as Dale opened a package of Life Savers, held it out to Charlotte (who took two), and said he had been invited to speak at a conference in Tel Aviv next winter. Hadn't Charlotte once mentioned she'd visited Israel? What did she have to say about it?

"Well," Charlotte rolled the Life Savers around her tongue, "you're not Jewish, so Israelis will admit you're a foreigner. They didn't with me. I mean, there I was, halfway around the world, and I didn't know anyone, and I didn't know Hebrew, and I couldn't find my way anywhere. And everyone kept saying to me, 'Now that you're in Israel, don't you feel that you've come home?' " Dale burst out laughing again, and she said, "I liked it there, though. A country where three times as many people smoke as jog obviously has plenty going for it." Neither Dale nor Charlotte smoked. But Charlotte liked the idea of smoking, the big taboo.

"Nice to hear there's someplace left nowadays where people know the difference between virtue and a low pulse rate," Dale said. He was barely thirty, but he used the word "nowadays" a lot. Last week, he had shown her a clipping about a California college student who had devised her own interdisciplinary major called "Understanding Myself." It involved courses in psychology, sociology, human biology, American civilization, and women's studies. "See what passes for education in California nowadays," he had said, and Charlotte had replied, "You mean still. That type of thing was much more common fifteen years ago." Now he was saying, "Have you got a dilemma of the week? I can't get through a week without one nowadays." He rocked back on his heels, a motion Charlotte had found she was unable to duplicate without losing her balance.

"This one actually happened," she said, and told him about Lucy, the philosophy department secretary who displayed on her desk a plaque saying, "Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get." "And guess what. Her fiancé jilted her last week, and the other secretary said, 'Remember, Lucy, success is getting what you want, and happiness is wanting what you get.' Lucy was furious. So what do you think? Who's the real villain of the story?"

"What do I think? I think you come up with the most amazing situations, Charlotte." Dale rocked back on his heels again and said he wouldn't have used Lucy's slogan against her himself, but he sympathized with the secretary who'd done it, because that slogan was a reproach to people who got things no one could want. "Someone should have told Lucy to hang it in a cancer ward."

Charlotte looked away. She had never told Dale about her mother. Telling him would be too much like using her mother's illness as a stepladder, and anyway, how could it work? What was he supposed to say, Your mother is dying; therefore, I pity you; therefore, I love you? "I couldn't agree more," she said. "Most people I know who are miserable have lives that would make me miserable."

"We're definitely on the same wave length," said Dale.

So why aren't you in love with me, you twit? Charlotte thought. "Well," she said, "I'd better go get started on my forecast."

She walked over to the wall where various kinds of weather maps hung beneath the typed quotation, " 'A forecaster's heart knoweth its own bitterness, but a stranger meddleth not with its joy.'—Sir Napier Shaw, 1854-1945." Charlotte had memorized the quote the first time she saw it, but she kept forgetting to ask who Sir Napier Shaw was. She took down several maps and laid them out on a long laboratory table. "How do you make a forecast?" her mother, a retired milliner, had once asked, and Charlotte had said, "How do you make a hat? There are patterns and standard techniques and rules, and one of the main rules is not to follow the rules too closely. You've got to have a knack." While she and Dale were talking, the room had been filling up with students, innocuous little fillers, like puffy, fair-weather cumulus clouds. All around her now she could hear voices exchanging numbers—58, 64, 62, 65—that could be temperature forecasts or possibly college basketball scores. The students liked sports. They treated forecasting like a sport. Charlotte preferred to think of it as a kind of magic. She even had an old thesaurus that

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listed "weatherman" and "meteorologist" under "oracle."

Forty minutes later, Charlotte bounded up from her seat—a thunderstorm seemed likely, just the sort of tricky forecasting problem she loved. She started across the room, nearly colliding with Helen Melrose, a flat-faced nineteen-year-old with large, moist, round eyes, who was the only other woman in the forecasting class. Charlotte thought of Helen as a warm front, humid and sticky, casting weak wetness over a large area. It was a special bonus that Helen's curly hair framed her face in little semicircles like the symbols for a warm front on a weather map.

"Hello, Charlotte," Helen was saying. "Are you doing the phone forecast today?"

"Yes, and I'm going against MOS." MOS was the acronym for Model Output Statistics, the computerized forecasts you were supposed to take into account or disregard as conditions required. Charlotte suspected that Helen simply followed these forecasts no matter what. "Just following MOS is like being fed intravenously instead of eating in the usual way," Charlotte said. "The results aren't as good and you miss all the fun." She turned to leave.

"I've been meaning to ask you" (like many warm fronts, Helen took a long time passing through), "how does a philosophy professor come to take up meteorology?"

Charlotte had been asked this so often she sometimes envisioned getting little cards printed up with her answer. "About a year ago, I was driving in a rainstorm," she said, "and it just struck me that it would be exciting, sort of practical and exotic at the same time, to do weather forecasting. For a long time, I figured this had about as much bearing on my life as the idea that it would be exciting to be Emperor of Japan. But when people began telling me I was so obsessed with it that maybe I should see a shrink, I decided it would make more sense to check out the nearest meteorology department instead."

"That's wonderful," said Helen. "You've got your life all together."

"Well, that part of it, anyway," said Charlotte, and noted that the sky was starting to cloud up on schedule. When the world doesn't bear me out, *it's* wrong, she was fond of saying. "I'd better go do the recording," she said. That was a fringe benefit of being in a well-known meteorology program. You could record your forecast over the weather laboratory's telephone line, and people actually called up to hear it.

The recording took hardly a minute, and when she emerged from the booth, Dale was at the radar screen. Charlotte glanced at him hopefully. But, like the sky, she had apparently gotten her share of sunshine. Dale was talking with Helen and two of the male students, and looking as interested and animated as he had with Charlotte. I hate you, Dale, Charlotte thought, recalling how her mother had said, "Even if he wanted you, it wouldn't work out, dear, because people so full of universal niceness aren't capable of single-minded loyalty." And now Dale didn't look her way. His eyes were on the screen. And Helen's eyes, moist and round and sticky as ever, were fixed on Dale like twin suction cups.

"TALK about Dale, dear," Charlotte's mother said, "and don't stint on details. I need a distraction."

Charlotte was sitting beside her mother's bed on what was supposed to be the first day of the clinical trial. But Charlotte was skeptical. The first day had been postponed twice. She glanced out the window (the sky wasn't doing badly, but it could use a few more clouds) and wondered what she could say about Dale that wouldn't sound ludicrously trivial in this setting. But maybe her mother wanted ludicrously trivial. That would be the distraction, Charlotte thought, and began to describe how yesterday she had decided to try a bit of brinkmanship. And so she had told Dale she was going to ask him a personal question and added a lot of build-up about how he obviously didn't have to answer it, but she hoped he would either tell the truth or simply say it was something he didn't want to discuss with her, because this was an area where she wanted very much not to be misled. Charlotte stopped for breath, seeing Dale standing near yesterday's weather maps, as agreeable and unsuspecting as if she were talking about her forecast or the dilemma of the week. "Naturally, he was supposed to wonder what the question was and whether it might even be how he felt about me or if he was involved with anyone else. But he didn't, I'm sure. He didn't because he couldn't see me through my cloak of invisibility. It's called being fat and forty, except that if I make a habit of saying trite things like that, I'll have another cloak of invisibility. Why should I give people an excuse to overlook my mind as well as my body?"

"Anyone who overlooks you is merely betraying his own obtuseness, dear." Charlotte's mother was looking at her watch. "Aren't they ever going to come? They're already two hours late."

"They don't give a damn about patients here, do they?" said Charlotte.

"Oh, they do, dear; we're right up there, ranking fourth after money, prestige, and convenience for the staff. What did you end up asking Dale?"

"I asked him what it was like to be a bigshot," Charlotte said. "I said fifteen years ago it seemed as if I was going to be one, but it hadn't worked out that way, and I wanted to know if I was missing a lot of thrills." She giggled. "I bet no one ever asked him that before. And he said he could hardly discuss it with just anyone, but of course it was a thrill, especially for someone who'd been such a nerd in college that he couldn't have gotten into a fraternity even if he'd wanted to. But he was

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afraid he was getting too dependent on it and that it wouldn't last, and it was apt to make people like him for the wrong reasons, although that beat not being liked at all. So at least he has the concept of liking someone for the wrong reasons. So—"

She broke off as a nurse came into the room. Charlotte gripped her mother's hand while the nurse described the procedure: two injections, which might cause sleepiness or nausea. "No real-life drama here," Charlotte's mother murmured. "I don't feel a thing," she said after the injections. But ten minutes after the nurse left, Charlotte's mother abruptly reached for the basin. "If you think—this is disgusting—that's just too bad," she said unsteadily. "I couldn't have put it better myself," Charlotte replied, and held the basin in position until her mother decided she wouldn't be needing it, after all. "Let's assume the nausea means the treatment's strong enough to work," Charlotte said. "Talk some more, dear. Say anything," said Charlotte's mother, and Charlotte said, "You know how self-help books say people don't know what they really want? I think that's a line to keep people from realizing they know exactly what they want and aren't getting it. I know what I want. I want you to get well, and Dale to be in love with me, and all my forecasts to come true, if you'll forgive my mentioning these things in the same breath."

"You didn't," said Charlotte's mother, her eyes closing. "You took a breath before the forecasts. And I don't mind as long as my getting well comes first. It's my *life*, after all."

"It does. I promise," said Charlotte, but her mother was already asleep.

"I promise not to mention your forecast," said Helen eight days later in the university cafeteria. "OK if I sit here?"

"Sure," Charlotte said, not bothering to point out that the promise was automatically broken in the making. Well, maybe the weather betrayed me today, but it looks as if there's going to be a warm front in my life anyhow, she said to herself. She would have liked Helen's lunch to include something, a bowl of clear soup, perhaps, suggesting weak wetness over a large area. But Helen's tray held only a grilled-cheese sandwich. Charlotte was having an all-chocolate lunch, chocolate layer cake and a brownie, to celebrate the fact that her mother's blood count already was marginally better. Besides, Charlotte had made a point of eating fattening food in public ever since reading that most overweight people were too ashamed to—as if they supposed that seeing them eat sparingly might convince an observer it was a diet of lettuce and cottage cheese that was blowing them up like weather balloons. "Well, how are things?" she said.

"Awful," said Helen, instantly jumping up several notches in Charlotte's estimation for not chirping, "Fine, thanks, and you?"

"Do you want to say why?" Charlotte took a forkful of cake, avoiding the frosting, which she felt virtuous for saving till last.

Helen shut her eyes tightly. She opened her mouth, closed it, and opened it again. She's milking this for all it's worth, and why not? Charlotte thought. It beat getting your real-life drama out of magazine articles about other people's tragedies. "I'm sort of in love with someone," Helen said, her eyes still shut. Then she opened them. "You know who it is, don't you?"

Oh, no, Charlotte thought. "Oh, no," she said. "How would I know?"

"It's Dale. I was afraid you might have guessed from the way I acted."

"No, I didn't guess," Charlotte said. "Does he reciprocate? Does he have anyone else?" she added so harshly that Helen gave her a brief, curious glance. But Helen's expression was unsuspecting. I was afraid you might have guessed from the way I acted, Charlotte thought, and scooped up a forkful of frosting ahead of schedule.

"He's always very friendly," Helen was saying. "But he never seeks me out or anything." He seeks *me* out, at least to talk, Charlotte said to herself. "I'm really not sure if he has anyone else," Helen continued, and bit into her sandwich, swallowing so hard Charlotte could hear her. "There's a woman I've seen him with, but it's hard to believe it could be anything romantic. She's a lot older than him. About forty. She's very attractive, kind of exotic-looking, but. . . ."

In class the previous week, Dale had explained how a cumulus cloud could turn into an explosive thunderstorm in barely an hour. Charlotte felt as if this were happening inside her now in barely an instant, and it had to be concealed, compounding the outrage. "So maybe he cares about looks, but not about age," she said evenly. "That would make him only half crummy."

"Just because she looks good doesn't mean he wouldn't like her if she didn't," said Helen.

"He's breaking your heart and you're worried about judging him unfairly?" Charlotte took a vicious bite of the cake. "Anyway, most men care about looks. So do most women, for that matter. Maybe it's original sin or something, but you live in a nasty world, just in case you haven't noticed." She gazed out the window at the nasty world, as calm and bright as if it hadn't even heard her forecast.

"But Dale isn't nasty," said Helen. "He's nice. That's why I'm so crazy about him. He's so nice."

Charlotte put down her fork. "Niceness is a vice masquerading as a virtue," she said.

"*What?*"

Charlotte giggled, then forced herself to breathe slowly and deeply. Her face felt singed. "What I mean is that if someone's too nice to people he doesn't much care about, he's often apt to make them like and want him a lot more than he likes and wants them. So they end up feeling terrible,

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and he gets to look and feel like a good guy, and he gets loyalty he hasn't earned."

"But he earns it by being nice," said Helen. "You can't expect people to go around being mean just to make sure no one's going to fall hopelesly in love with them."

Having finished her cake, Charlotte was starting on the brownie. It was fudgy and dense. "They don't have to be mean," she said. "There's a middle ground. There's nice and there's nice. Maybe they ought to be willing to forgo a little personal popularity in order to prevent some broken hearts."

Helen had propped her chin on both fists and was staring at Charlotte. "But—"

"Actually," Charlotte said hastily, "I don't know Dale all that well. I was thinking of the man who supervised my Ph.D. thesis at Cornell." She flicked a mental snicker at her dissertation adviser, a choleric ex-Jesuit about as likely an object of unrequited love as the square root of minus three, and tried to sound as if she were reminiscing. "He made so many people miserable, including me," she said, "because he was so nice and concerned. So, naturally, we all wanted much more from him than we got. I was ashamed of being one of his victims, so on top of everything else, I had to struggle to keep my feelings hidden all the time. It was like being on a maintenance diet—all that effort, and you get nothing to show for it except the bad thing that *doesn't* happen." She decided against mentioning that she knew both sides of that equation. In her thirties, she had lost sixty pounds and kept them off for over a year until, like the dieters she saw written up as object lessons in women's magazines, she had gained the weight back because being slim hadn't made her attractive, let alone changed her life. The magazines made this sound pathological, but Charlotte considered it just common sense. If losing weight didn't bring you happiness, shouldn't you at least have the fun of eating what you liked?

"I still can't believe you really think it's bad to be nice," Helen was saying.

Charlotte wasn't sure how much she thought it, either, but there was a pinch of truth in there somewhere, and besides, she liked the way it sounded. It wasn't what other people would say. Too bad she couldn't try it out on Dale as the dilemma of the week. You come up with the most amazing ideas, Charlotte, he would say. Surely, that other woman was only a friend. If he didn't care about age, wouldn't he know where to turn?

"I'LL give you the dilemma this week," Dale said in the weather laboratory two weeks later.

Charlotte was standing in a trapezoid of sunlight at the end of a dustbeam pointing toward her like a wand. She felt enchanted. Anything could happen. Hadn't her mother gained three pounds? Weren't her blood counts progressively improving? No predictions from the doctor, of course, no forecasting game. So Charlotte was playing her own. In her mind, her mother was already convalescing in Charlotte's guest room, with the bay window and the view of the lake. Charlotte beamed at Dale; wasn't he about to say, I'm in love with you, Charlotte; I'm in love with you, and I don't know what to do? I'll tell you what to do, Charlotte thought.

"Do you ever go to the botanical gardens?" Dale said.

Charlotte nodded, wondering what he was leading up to. She had always provided the dilemmas before. "I've been there twice this year, and I haven't run into a dilemma of the week there yet," she said.

Dale laughed and rocked back on his heels. "That's probably because you haven't had someone interrupt a conversation there. My girlfriend and I were sitting by the lily pond and talking about a problem she's had with her work lately, and a man came along and asked how to get to the greenhouse and then to the wild flower garden. I gave him both the directions, but it took a while, and afterward, my girlfriend said I should have pretended I didn't know. 'You put a stranger ahead of me,' she said. Once she put it that way, I realized she was right. It's a matter of priorities. So what do you think?"

What do I think? I think the two of you should freeze to death in a blizzard I deliberately didn't mention in my forecast. Charlotte's mind itself seemed to be freezing over, with all the details horribly in place like separate icicles. So he did have someone, someone like Charlotte, someone Charlotte could have been. Should have been. She had values like Charlotte's, values most people would disapprove of, was as demanding as Charlotte wished she could get away with being, found issues in unlikely places just as Charlotte did. And Dale loved having a girlfriend like this. His face was shining. Charlotte's own face felt ready to burst. "But you seem so universally nice," she said. "You don't seem the type to pretend you don't know directions."

"Being universally nice when loyalty isn't at stake doesn't mean you're going to be that way when it is," said Dale.

So he *was* capable of single-minded loyalty, and he was giving it. To someone else. Someone very attractive and exotic, the woman Helen had seen? Charlotte gripped the edge of a long table. "I think your girlfriend has terrific judgment," she said. "I—this is fascinating. Tell me more about her. Is she a meteorologist, too? How old is she? How long have you been together?"

"She's a violinist and she's forty-two. We've known each other for five months," said Dale, who had known Charlotte for seven, "but—"

But Charlotte had decided that she couldn't stand to hear any more. "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't" wasn't merely a stupid

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cliché; it was false. Like "Beggars can't be choosers." "Do you believe beggars can't be choosers?" she said. "I think that's a terrible idea. Of course, beggars can be choosers."

"What?" Dale said. "Is this part of the same dilemma?"

"No, we've covered that one. This is the one I have for you." She was talking too fast. Did he notice? "Why do people believe beggars can't be choosers?" she said.

"I suppose the idea is that beggars have no leverage or they wouldn't need to beg," said Dale. "So if they try to be choosy, they're apt to end up with nothing."

"Maybe not." Charlotte felt giddy. "Maybe they can *take* the leverage. Maybe if you show you won't settle for just anything, people will realize you're entitled to a choice. You just have to take a risk." She was always taking risks with her forecasts, going for long shots. Her mother was going for a long shot. "Do you see what I mean?"

"I'm not sure," Dale said. "Do you have any examples?"

"No, I guess I haven't really thought it out." All at once, Charlotte felt calm and confident, her mind closing over the girlfriend like water over a stone thrown into a lake. Suppose Dale had mentioned the girlfriend to tantalize Charlotte and make her jealous. In a few hours, Charlotte would manage to suppose this, not so she would bet on it, but so she could at least fall back on it in her imagination. What harm could this stranger do her? A forecaster's heart knoweth its own bitterness, but a stranger meddleth not with its joy.

CHARLOTTE'S joy increased steadily during the next three weeks. Dale didn't talk about the girlfriend again. Perhaps he had invented her, the way Charlotte might have invented a boyfriend in the hope of piquing Dale's interest, if she hadn't been afraid of getting confused and inconsistent about details. Instead, Dale talked about his work. He was afraid of losing his momentum, never making his great contribution, having his spurt of glory dry up almost before it began, like a summer cloudburst. "It can happen," Charlotte said. "It happened to me. You put up with it because you have to, which is what people seem to like to call maturity, but you never stop wanting to make a grand dramatic gesture to show you don't have to settle, after all." "Do you want to make a grand dramatic gesture?" Dale asked. "It varies," said Charlotte, recalling how her mother had said, "Certainly, you shouldn't settle, but grand dramatic gestures look ridiculous and pathetic except to someone who's already interested in you, dear."

And every day, her mother was getting stronger. Every day, she spent more time out of bed. "Her response is encouraging," the doctor told Charlotte, "but remember, her immune system is still depressed. Any little infection could be dangerous." Already Charlotte had washed her guestroom curtains and gotten a new bedspread in her mother's favorite shade of dusky pink. "The results so far are clearly favorable," said the doctor, "but we can't predict the future." Then maybe you should try predicting the past, Charlotte wanted to say. She was first in the forecasting game now, insulated with her mother and Dale in a clear bubble where even the weather—like a snowstorm in a glass paperweight—was under her control. But one day, she came home from a drive along the lake to find a message on her answering machine. "There's an emergency with your mother. Come right away." The message was two hours old, and it was too late.

YOU could be too desolate to cry, just as it could be too cold to snow. It was three days before Charlotte left her bed except for necessities, three days before it even occurred to her that she had scarcely thought about Dale since the message from the hospital. But now, reading over the newspaper obituary ("Ruth Corenthal, 80, retired milliner," naming Charlotte as the survivor), she imagined him reading it, too, and wanting to comfort her. Pinpoints of guilt and excitement flared within her like a fireworks display, but she forced them down.

THE weather laboratory was unchanged, of course, except that she was no longer first on the forecasting game list. No one was in the room when she returned, and then, a moment later, there was Dale. Again she fought down the excitement.

"Glad you're back," he was saying. "Did you have the flu like everybody else?" His voice was rich and warm, the voice he always had. For everyone.

"Yes," she said. But Dale's eyes were already on the maps. A cold front was headed their way, a front that would give rise to storms and leave things clearer in its wake. Charlotte shivered. Why, that's me, she thought dizzily; I'm a cold front! Starting now. And she shivered again and gripped the edge of a long table and spoke before she could think anything else.

"No," she said. "I didn't have the flu. My mother died last week. Of leukemia."

Dale looked at her, the sun facing the front. "I'm very sorry," he said. "I had no idea." Charlotte said nothing. "How long did she have the leukemia?" Dale asked.

"Not long enough," said Charlotte. "Better dying than dead. That's how she felt, too."

"Hardly anyone admits that nowadays," said Dale. He paused. "I'm really sorry about your mother." There was a longer pause. "Are you doing the phone forecast?" he asked finally.

"Yes," Charlotte said. "Yes, I'm doing the forecast." She laughed—a thick, almost unrecognizable sound. "There's a cold front coming. Right now. Can't you see? I'm the front. No, I'm not

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cracking up. I've just gotten used to thinking of people in terms of the weather. And you," she continued with a dreadful sense of release, not caring that she was almost screaming, no, glad of it, "you're the sun, shining your warmth and light on everyone, as if 'I'm very sorry' were enough, because you naturally never bothered to think about me long enough to suspect that all along you were making me want—I wanted you to—" She turned, running from the laboratory and into the bathroom, all her stored-up tears streaming down, making her face red and puffier than ever. For a long time she sobbed, then stared at her reflection in the bathroom mirror, knowing what she had done, contemplating the risk, the evilness, and the betrayal, but at least she wasn't settling anymore, and her mother hadn't wanted her to settle, had she? And so half an hour later, eyes swollen but dry, Charlotte returned to the laboratory, no longer fighting the excitement, just holding herself carefully to keep from shivering again.

Dale was alone in the room. He was standing by the window. She walked over to him.

"Dale," she said, "I'm sorry about screaming at you. I. . . ."

Dale turned around but didn't meet her gaze. "Don't worry about it," he said. "When your mother dies, you're not supposed to act like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. I took down the maps if you want to do the forecast," he added, gesturing toward a long table.

A dead sickness flooded through Charlotte. She had betrayed her mother, trying to use her death as a stepladder to Dale, and gotten nothing in return. To sell your soul and gain nothing, maybe that was justice, after all. But in her mind she could hear her mother's voice saying, Justice has nothing to do with it, dear. It's simply that grand dramatic gestures look ridiculous and pathetic except to someone who's already interested in you, and he likes talking with you but he's chosen someone very attractive and exotic, and you live in a nasty world, just in case you haven't noticed.

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"Witness" Recalled

Eric J. Sundquist

WHEN it first appeared in 1952, Whittaker Chambers's monumental spiritual autobiography *Witness* was hailed as a masterpiece of political writing and became an immediate best-seller. Today, Chambers (who died in 1961) remains a hero to many conservatives—and a monster to many on the Left—but to most of the educated public his life is little known and his writings still less read. Students stare dumbly at the mention of his name, or recall him, at best, as the strange man who hid microfilm in his pumpkins during the perjury trial of his nemesis Alger Hiss. Of course, everything Chambers stood for—and most especially his dogmatic belief that the spiritual decay of the West dooms it to defeat by Communism—goes against today's prevailing intellectual grain, as it did, in truth, against yesterday's. But whatever one's view of the man, Chambers's confessional *Witness* remains one of the most important works of political literature to be written in America.*

The outline of Chambers's life is dramatic enough in its own right. Born into a cultivated but unstable Long Island family, Chambers became an accomplished student of literature and languages and showed distinct talent as a writer during his years of sporadic attendance at Columbia College in the early 1920's. When he dropped out of school, one of his mentors, Mark Van Doren, suggested that he visit the Soviet Union because "the Russian Revolution is like Elizabethan England. All the walls are falling down." Chambers got only as far as Europe, but, like others of his generation, he reacted to the growing economic and political crisis of the world (and to a personal crisis) by turning to Communism in 1925. Except for a period from 1929-30 when he left the American Communist party because of internal disputes, he worked loyally and successfully as a writer and editor for the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*.

In 1932, Chambers was recruited into the Soviet underground. He acted as a courier for stolen government documents and became the instrumental contact for a variety of New Deal government officials, eventually including Alger Hiss, then with the State Department, whom he helped recruit into the Communist network. Chambers broke with the party in 1938, when the truth of the Stalinist terror became apparent to him. Denounced as a Trotskyite and summoned to Moscow, he went briefly into hiding (for he was convinced he would be killed). Upon his reemergence he worked for a decade as an editor at *Time* magazine, where his essays and reviews followed an implicit and sometimes explicit anti-Communist line, even during the war years when such a stance was not widely popular.

In 1948, after Elizabeth Bentley, an ex-Communist operative, accused several government officials of espionage for the Soviet Union, Chambers was subpoenaed to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), of which Richard Nixon was then a member. In his testimony Chambers accused Alger Hiss, among others, of being a Communist, although he denied (and perjured himself in denying) that Hiss, to whom he had apparently been close in the underground, had been directly involved in espionage. Hiss was by then serving as a high official in the State Department. He ridiculed Chambers's story, asserting that he had known Chambers only very briefly as a journalist named "George Crosley."†

President Truman, who had instituted a federal loyalty program in 1947, dismissed the case as a "red herring" created by partisan politics. Although Truman's stance galled Chambers and his sympathizers, it is evident now that the President was also working behind the scenes to squelch Hiss's power. In any event, after Chambers repeated his charges on *Meet the Press*, Hiss filed a libel suit. In his deposition to Hiss's attorneys in the libel action, and before a New York grand jury later in the year, Chambers finally produced evidence of Hiss's espionage in the form of microfilm and transcribed documents.

The testimony that led ultimately to Alger Hiss's conviction for perjury in 1949 also led to Chambers's great written work—and to his personal exhaustion. Torn between the need to expose the Communist conspiracy and a desire to

ERIC J. SUNDQUIST is professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. His most recent book is *Faulkner: The House Divided*.

* *Witness* is currently available in paperback editions from Regnery Press and the University Press of America.

† For more on Hiss-Chambers, see Eric M. Breindel's article, "Alger Hiss: A Glimpse Behind the Mask" in last month's COMMENTARY—ED.

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show mercy toward Hiss as an individual, Chambers went through episodes of deep despair during the grand jury hearings and subsequent trials, and he once attempted to take his own life rather than carry out his destruction of Hiss. The despair is evident in *Witness*, where, however, it is also disciplined by the overriding power of religious faith.

After the conclusion of the Hiss case in 1949, and still more after the success of *Witness* in 1952, Chambers largely withdrew from public debate, to his cherished farm in Maryland. His despondency over what he took to be the spiritual illness of the West would not go away, and again he several times contemplated suicide. But he still continued his testimony against Communism, writing sporadically throughout the decade and accepting a position with *National Review* from 1957 to 1959. A posthumous volume of prose, *Cold Friday*, appeared in 1964; and William F. Buckley, Jr., published a collection of Chambers's remarkable letters to him, *Odyssey of a Friend*, in 1969.

TO WHAT can we ascribe the obscurity into which the name of Whittaker Chambers has fallen? One factor may be merely personal. Chambers's break with Communism, and his long witness against it, required a deep inner upheaval, of a kind that to many people now must seem quaint at best, if not altogether inexplicable. But more obvious than this are cultural-political factors: the enduring pieties of lay Stalinism (in Jean-François Revel's phrase), and the accession of leftist politics and scholarship over the last two decades. Yet this does not fully explain the matter either, for even inside the academy the majority of liberals today appear to believe that Chambers generally told the truth, and that Hiss was guilty; whatever questions can be raised about the conduct of HUAC or the FBI, the central evidence against Hiss still stands. The problem, rather, lies elsewhere: first, in the belief that Chambers's testimony and his ideologically charged autobiography helped pave the way for the often irresponsible tactics of anti-Communist investigation associated with Senator McCarthy; and, second, in what seems to many to be the reactionary and bizarre nature of Chambers's vigorous appeal to faith in God.*

In the late 1940's and early 1950's much legitimate testimony against the "generation on trial" (to borrow the title of Alistair Cooke's book on the Hiss-Chambers case) was engulfed in the public mind by the destructive theatricality of McCarthyism. In the ranks of the anti-Communist Left, friendships divided over the propriety of naming names and of public denunciation. (Chambers himself, it should be noted, considered McCarthy inept and dishonest, and he resisted the Senator's attempts to enlist his support.) And even those ex-Communists and anti-Communists who shared Chambers's cause seldom shared his religious faith or his sweeping condemnation of New Deal liberalism. Sidney Hook—both at the time and more recently in his autobiography, *Out of Step*—has not been alone in vigorously disputing Chambers's Manichean claim that one must choose between God and Communism.

As McCarthyism passed into decadence, and domestic anti-Communism along with it, it became a fine question in some minds whether Chambers, the unkempt visionary who claimed that the whole of the New Deal was a "revolution . . . not by tanks and machine guns, but by acts of Congress and decisions of the Supreme Court," was not somehow more at fault than Hiss, the well-groomed establishment figure exposed as a traitor. The distrust of Chambers exhibited by large segments of the political and intellectual establishment during the HUAC hearings and perjury trials—what Chambers refers to in *Witness* as the "pro-Hiss psychosis"—became ingrained thereafter in reactions to his autobiography. Even sympathetic assessments of Chambers, like Allen Weinstein's in his definitive account of the Hiss-Chambers case, *Perjury* (1978), have typically considered *Witness* only as a source of information.† All this has impeded a reconsideration of *Witness* as a political and, especially, a literary work. Such a reconsideration decidedly does not require yet another rehearsal of the details of the case and its accumulated minutiae. What it does require is that we not shy away from Chambers's demanding conjunction of political freedom and belief in God.

IN A 1959 letter to Buckley, Chambers remarked that *Witness* was "chiefly a poem." Like Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*, he added, "few know it; they read into it the meanings they choose."

The comparison with Koestler's searing novelistic portrayal of the Moscow show trials is apt for several reasons. For one thing, in the course of the HUAC hearings and subsequently in the two trials, Chambers felt that *he* was on trial—that "in a manner startlingly reminiscent of the mechanics of the great Soviet public trials," the media, the intelligentsia, and even the government were mobilized against him, "while public opinion was enveloped in a smog of smearing whispers."

Yet the more important resemblance lies in the example of Chambers's spiritual courage. Like Koestler's hero Rubashov, Whittaker Chambers became a man whose "I," whose witnessing conscience, refused to succumb to what Koestler called "the grammatical fiction," the nihilism that lay at the root of Communism. Rubashov imagines that if the prosecutor had asked him, "what of

* Diana Trilling has expressed both these views in responding to an article by Hilton Kramer, "Thinking About *Witness*," that appeared in the March 1988 *New Criterion*. Their exchange was published in the May 1988 issue of that magazine.

† Weinstein's book remains the focal point of endless dispute, but its conclusive portrait of Hiss's guilt has never been dislodged. A convenient summary of the case can also be found in Irving Younger's "Was Alger Hiss Guilty?" COMMENTARY, August 1975.

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the infinite?," he "would not have been able to answer"—for as Koestler writes, under Communism "the infinite was a politically suspect quantity, the 'I' a suspect quality. The party did not recognize its existence." As a statement of political conscience and of ultimate faith, *Witness* answers the great hypothetical question, "what of the infinite?," yet not without agonies of doubt and punishing self-division. The poetic dimensions of *Witness* lie not just in its flights of mystical inspiration and sometimes ornate language, but also in its revealing strains of anxiety and ambivalence.

WHILE the massiveness of the book (which runs to over 700 pages) and its wealth of details resist convenient summary, the very structure of Chambers's autobiography gives some indication of its narrative drama and its role as a document of freedom under siege. After a justly famous prefatory statement of anti-Communist faith entitled "A Letter to My Children," Chambers begins his life *in medias res* with "Flight," the story of his break with the Communist underground in 1938. "Flight" is the heart of the book insofar as it provides the grounds for Chambers's conversion from evil and for his public witness against that evil ten years later. The motive lay in Chambers's gradual recognition that the Soviet terror of the 1930's, "like the Communist-Nazi pact later on, was the true measure of Stalin as a revolutionary statesman. That was the horror of the Purge—that acting as a Communist, Stalin had acted rightly."

Only after this statement has been made does *Witness* travel backward to the birth of Jay Vivian Chambers (his given name) and detail his journey toward treason and ultimate salvation. The next eight chapters follow his life from boyhood up to the moment of the break recorded in "Flight"; and the following long chapter, entitled "The Tranquil Years," which is devoted to Chambers's troubled editorship at *Time* and his reclusive personal life on his Maryland farm, carries forward to the fateful year of 1948. Then the last chapters recapitulate the story largely known to the public (including long sections transcribing testimony before HUAC and in the Hiss trials), and an epilogue taking its title, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow," from *Macbeth*, records Chambers's final brooding thoughts on the meaning of his witness.

Just as "Flight" recounts the precipitating events of Chambers's conversion, the "Letter" placed at the very beginning is in essence the philosophical conclusion of *Witness*. Focusing on the central issues of freedom, faith, and family, it courts sentimentality and pathos in order to express the union of religion and politics that will become the overriding crux of Chambers's life and, in his view, of the age. One of the most moving of modern essays on the question of Communism, the "Letter" introduces a work that leads the reader (in Chambers's words) "to Golgotha—the place of skulls," there to hang "upon the cross of himself" and measure the depth of his own faith. If Chambers's personal identification with Christ seems melodramatic, the larger point he is making here—that by mid-century, much of the modern world had become a place of skulls—is beyond question.

Chambers claims to have suddenly experienced in 1938 a moment of "untroubled peace"; but as he also goes on to demonstrate, his renunciation of Communism was produced less by a sudden religious illumination than by the recognition that totalitarian rule was condemning the world to darkness. As Chambers admits of the period when he broke from Communism, "I cannot say that I then believed in God. I sought God." It appears, in fact, that the process of Chambers's conversion took years, perhaps a decade or longer. The contention by some, including Hook, that Chambers falsely created a faith that he did not have in the late 1930's thus misses two points that *Witness* itself makes clear: first, that to Chambers freedom from Stalinism and faith in God were joined not so much by logical causation as experientially; and second, that Chambers was so deeply troubled by his own treason and then by his escape from its demands that he came forward to testify only reluctantly, when subpoenaed to do so, not when moved by religious conviction.

The period following Chambers's disavowal of treason and Stalinism may have seemed calm in comparison, but his characterization of it as "The Tranquil Years" can only be construed as ironic. Not only did he find himself, at *Time*, embattled with that magazine's contingent of pro-Soviet reporters and editors, but nothing had come of the information he had given to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle in 1939. How deep, he wondered, did the espionage conspiracy go? In this period of agitated quiescence Chambers became more convinced than ever that Hitler and Stalin were cut from the same cloth—and convinced, what is more, that few in the free world were willing to face the fact.

"THE Tranquil Years" is not the only chapter whose title is colored by irony. "The Story of a Middle-Class Family" is the name of the chapter detailing the rather Dickensian beginning of Chambers's life. His "terrible birth" on April 1, 1901 was physically difficult for his mother, while his father crumpled the telegram informing him of the event because "he did not think that April Fool jokes were in good taste." A lonely child with few friends, Chambers grew up in a cultivated but eccentric and destructive family. Of his parents, his brother Richard, and himself, Chambers writes, "we were four people living in emotional and physical anarchy."

By the time he turned to Communism, his family had become a living nightmare. His father, a cold and distant man who insisted that his sons call him Jay, deserted the family for several years

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(to take a homosexual lover, we now know) before returning to live, hermit-like, in a separate room. The disclosure by Chambers's mother that his father "had never wanted" him cut his emotional ties "like a poisoned knife." On one extreme occasion Chambers fought with his father to prevent him from beating to death the drunken Richard. His father's emotional cruelty, the presence of an insane grandmother (who wandered the house with a concealed knife), and most of all the gruesome 1926 suicide by gas of his brother, on his third try—all these factors understandably contributed to Chambers's sense that the modern world and the bourgeois family were alike suffering "the disorder that overtakes societies and families when a world has lost its soul" and "the toxins of its slow decay poisoned all life within it." Emblematic of world crisis, the family for Chambers was the crucible of his descent into Communism—as it would later become the means of his spiritual regeneration.

The chapters devoted to Chambers's youth and his early years as a Communist point toward a characteristic of his later life, revealing a split between what might be called the private and the ideological self. Thus, although the events of the following long chapter, "The Communist Party," overlap to some degree those of "The Story of a Middle-Class Family," Chambers separates them into distinct sections. So completely, indeed, do the parts of *Witness* devoted to Chambers's life in the party ignore the private self that we find out very little about his several romantic affairs and nothing of substance about the illicit "party marriage" to Ida Dales that ended with the abortion of their child. Even his relationship with Esther Shemitz, whom he married in 1931, is treated but sparingly as compared with the wealth of details about his work for the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*, the factional struggles of the American Communist party in the early 1930's, and eventually the clandestine espionage he engaged in through a variety of contacts and under a number of aliases.

As Allen Weinstein has shown, Chambers's confidential testimony to the FBI would later make clear that he was in effect living four lives during his years as a Communist, especially after he went underground in 1932. He worked as an espionage agent; he led a deliberately separate existence in Maryland with his wife and children; he tried to maintain a circle of New York intellectual friends, including the Columbia art historian Meyer Schapiro, outside the party network; and he engaged in a series of homosexual affairs with mostly anonymous lovers, some dating back to the years before his marriage. It is here that the split between private and public selves becomes most complex, for although *Witness* glosses over entirely this darkest part of Chambers's life, it was the cover of Communist underground work that allowed him to explore his hidden sexual self. Chambers would later tell the FBI that he "broke" from homosexuality at the same time he broke from Communism in 1938; but the evidence suggests that, just as his full religious conversion did not occur for several years, so his final choice of heterosexuality and devotion solely to his wife and children was not made immediately.

Chambers's homosexuality would be one of the most notorious but suppressed issues of the Hiss perjury trial (suppressed, because any such charge brought by the defense would have redounded unpleasantly upon Hiss himself and his stepson, Timothy Hobson). While it seems to have had no bearing whatsoever on his ability to tell the truth about Hiss and the Communist network, Chambers's homosexuality does bear on the story told in *Witness* by reminding us of the limits of his "confession," marking off a portion of his soul—and what he came to depict as his descent into hell—that could not be revealed. Although Chambers would later denounce the implication by Hiss's attorneys that he had had a homosexual attachment to his brother, it seems likely that his disturbed sexual life, like his embrace of Communism, was at least partly rooted in his grim childhood and painful family relations. More to the point, his work as an underground agent, offering anonymity and a life of secret personalities, created an environment in which both treason and sexual dissipation could take place.

Whatever the nature of Chambers's homosexual life or his reasons for concealing it, the moral stability he later found in his marriage and family was likewise critical to his witness against Communism. As "The Tranquil Years" indicates, the family for Chambers was a bulwark against darkness and secularism. Indeed, a brief intervening chapter, entitled "The Child" and focusing on the birth of his daughter in 1933, links the two longer chapters on his establishment of an underground apparatus involving Alger Hiss and other government officials. "The Child" pits morality against ideology. Here Chambers asserts that he was torn between his longing for children and his belief that they should not be brought into so tragic a world. But rather than accept the Communist view that abortion, a "commonplace of party life," was "a mere physical manipulation," Chambers and his wife chose the life of a child "who, even before her birth, had begun, invisibly, to lead us out of that darkness, which we could not even realize, toward that light, which we could not even see."

The meaning of "The Child" in Chambers's life is even more striking in view of the private portion of his self he cannot confess. Ida Dales's abortion, an event deleted from *Witness*, is now transformed and redeemed. "The Child" takes on the characteristics of an allegorical emblem, as Chambers recalls the miracle of his daughter's ear, with its "delicate convolutions" giving evidence of God's design. Whereas the degradation of Chambers's childhood led him to choose Communism—in "an act of despair" consonant with the world economic crisis of the late 1920's—the saving grace

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of his own family would lead him to choose freedom, in an act of faith consonant with the more terrible crisis of the late 1930's.

IN COMMITTING "the characteristic crimes of my century," Chambers says, he not only rejected God but did so for political reasons: Communism required the annihilation of faith. "The Division Point," another brief chapter overlapping chronologically with "Flight" and separating Chambers's underground life from the "tranquil" years of the war period, records the tentative reunifying of the religious and the political, the private and the ideological. The Stalinist purge had prompted Chambers to read Vladimir Tchernavin's 1934 book, *I Speak for the Silent Prisoners of the Soviets*, which was available the following year in translation (although Chambers, a master of languages, possibly read it in the original). Tchernavin's account of his escape to Finland after being sentenced in the "wreckers" trials in 1931 offered verification of stories about Stalinism Chambers already feared were true. A decade later it offered him a model of the book as weapon. "I tell my own story," Tchernavin wrote, "because I believe that only in this way can I discharge the moral obligation which a kindly Fate imposed upon me in helping me to escape the Soviet Terror—the duty to speak for those whose voices cannot be heard." The germ of spiritual rebirth lay at once in the Soviet slaughter and in the example of a witness whose testimony, steeped in bloody reality, would lead finally to Chambers's own.

To suggest that Chambers himself escaped the Stalinist terror may seem absurd; many readers have found incredible his fear of assassination by the GPU after his break with the party. The fact remains, however, that party purges were not confined to the Soviet Union—either in the 1930's or when Chambers later came forward to testify—and his nightlong vigils with a pistol at his side, if melodramatic, were not without cause.

More importantly, perhaps, the example of Tchernavin signaled to Chambers his own identification not so much with the victims of Soviet terror as with its perpetrators. This, indeed, might be the element lying behind the deep division within Chambers that runs through so many facets of the story in *Witness*. After all, Chambers too had committed treason. If he "heard screams"—to borrow a metaphor repeated several times in his text—they were screams for which he bore a measure of responsibility. Himself a sometimes posturing victim, Chambers also felt very deeply that his crimes were not distinct from those of the Soviet Union; and later, taking on the awful doubleness of the informer's role, in his public witness he made Hiss and others the victims of his own confession. In this sense, neither Chambers's faith nor his Manichean vision of a world divided between God and Communism gave him any peace or shielded him from self-laceration. On the contrary, the true meaning of faith would come to lie in the pain it caused.

So the tranquility of Chambers's years at *Time* resided in the fact that the years preceding were ones of treason, while those after would be ones of vilification and private despair. The *Time* chapter is revealing not just for its account of his battle against Communism as a writer and editor in the national press but also for its picture of a private Whittaker Chambers—the Chambers who sought to adopt a simple Quaker life on his Maryland farm while publicly engaged in the great ideological war of the modern era. In "The Tranquil Years," as elsewhere in *Witness*, Chambers identifies pastoral simplicity with honest virtue and anti-Communism. When his witness against Hiss begins, it is the "common" people, his farm neighbors, not the secular elite of the cities, who support him. Whereas before the Hiss trials the farm must often have seemed a disquieting refuge, an escape into treason by silence, it now became for Chambers both an "altar" where "to labor is to pray," and a "witness against the world" of modernism and secular faith.

When he was called to testify in 1948, Chambers underwent extraordinary emotional turmoil. Doubtful that he would be believed, uncertain he could stand the strain of revealing the truth about himself, and equally disturbed by the moral implications of being an informer, he nevertheless felt morally obligated and he considered that it was in order to meet his fate that "the tranquil strengthening years had been granted to me." As he writes in "Flight," it is "practically impossible for a man who knows there is a murderer at large, quietly to cultivate his garden while ignoring the screams of the victims in the next yard." In witnessing against Communism and against Hiss, however, Chambers also witnessed against himself, choosing deliberately to destroy a superficial public tranquility, and to betray a man whom he still considered a friend, in order to find a deeper, more lasting peace.

IN ONE of his last anti-Communist pieces for *Time*, a 1947 review of Rebecca West's *The Meaning of Treason* entitled "Circles of Perdition," Chambers explored an extended metaphor that would become important in *Witness*. Following Dante's lead, the review describes "a descent into the circles of a drab inferno." Treason, Chambers wrote, in its "sin against the spirit," carries one down to a hellish circle of "absolute loneliness into which neither father, wife, child, nor friend, however compassionate, can bring the grace of absolution."

In *Witness*, the use of Dante is more particular. Among other metaphors that variously describe his break from Communism as a rebirth, a recovery from illness, or a return from the dead, the most powerful, but in many ways peculiar, of Chambers's figurative descriptions are his several allusions to Dante's ascent *out of* the Inferno to

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behold the stars, his symbol of grace and salvation. Invoked first in the "Letter to My Children," as a symbol of the infinite, the stars appear again in the final pages of *Witness* as a symbol of the faith that Chambers hopes to pass on to his son's generation.

Chambers's specific allusions to Dante's ascent go even further than this. He quotes the final line of the *Inferno*—"And so we emerged again to see the stars"—in a footnote explaining that this was a line penned by him at the conclusion of the report of his interrogation by the FBI in 1949, and he mistakenly asserts that the words are also the last line of Marx's *Capital*. He was perhaps confusedly remembering the preface to *Capital*, where Marx misquotes Virgil's remark to Dante in the *Purgatorio*, "Follow your own course, and let people talk" (Marx, an avid reader of Dante, altered the Italian and wrote, "Follow me, and let people talk"). More likely, however, Chambers was recollecting the preface to Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*, the precursor to *Capital*, which ends with the famous line of Dante describing the entrance into hell: "Here must all fear be left behind; here let all cowardice be dead."

For Marx, allusions to Dante are always a means of demonstrating that the wretched of the economic world are the victims of the ruling capitalist class. Marx's *Critique* leads the reader into a modern inferno in order to expose its corruptions and exploitation. Chambers, by contrast, had experienced 20th-century Communism as the true inferno. His allusions, turning Marx's use of Dante on its head, implicitly point to the next lines that record the legend inscribed above the portal to the Inferno: "Through me you enter the woeful city; through me you enter eternal grief; through me you enter among the lost." This is what had come of Marx's vision. By the same token, however, Chambers too remained in part psychologically lodged in hell, unpunished for his own treason despite his ascent toward grace. As his reading of Dante would have reminded him, the traitors trapped in the lowest circle of hell can find no absolution, but weep frozen tears and feed grimly upon one another.

SOME of the same doubleness of feeling animates several other important literary allusions in *Witness*, at least one of which is more consciously heroic. Quoting, from Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the lines that depict the biblical hero "Eyeless in Gaza, as at the mill with slaves," Chambers dramatizes the fact that in 1936, after the birth of his son, he was on the verge of "violently [breaking] from the slaves of the Communist mill." The passage is one of several in *Witness* containing allusions to Samson. Just as the blinded hero slew the Philistines by bringing down the pagan temple, thus delivering Israel from dominion, so Chambers, weakened and snared by forces pitted against his strength, hoped in his testimony to bring down the pagan temple of Communism. Both in the biblical account and more pointedly in Milton's rendering, Samson's story is one of secrets and betrayal, as Delilah and other "spies" attempt to discover the secret of his strength. That strength returns, by God's grace, when Samson is called upon to perform comic entertainment at sacrifices to the Philistines' god, Dagon; likewise, Chambers's strength returns during his public humiliation and ridicule by the intelligentsia and the press. In Milton's poem, the chorus speaks several times specifically of the sacramental "witness" dramatized in Samson and his "trial"—and Samson, of course, in bringing down the house of the Philistines, destroys himself, just as Chambers said he too was willing to do.

Allusions to tragic drama similarly abound in *Witness*, most of all to classic Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. As with *Samson Agonistes*, the tragic dramas on which Chambers drew tend to revolve around betrayals of national security, to depict heroes acting on behalf of populaces that in Milton's words have grown to "love Bondage more than Liberty," and in general to explore the ambiguous area between statesmanship and political tyranny.

Here, however, the disturbing undercurrent is often more telling than the surface meaning. For example, when Chambers quotes the famous choric lines from *Antigone*, "Much is there passing strange,/Nothing surpassing mankind," he not only places his narrative within the same transcendent pattern of fate spelled out by Sophocles' chorus, but also invites the reader to recall the other actions of *Antigone* that are echoed in *Witness*. The king Creon has ordered that the body of Polynices, a rebel against the state slain by his patriotic brother Eteocles, be left on the battlefield unburied because he intended "to burn and destroy/His fatherland and the gods of his fatherland,/To drink the blood of his kin, and to make them slaves." Antigone, Polynices' sister, breaks the law established by Creon when she buries her brother.

Chambers and Hiss clearly parallel Eteocles and Polynices; but Chambers's feelings of kindness and guilt toward Hiss are also echoed in Antigone's witness of "mercy" and her claim, upheld by the vision of the prophet Tiresias, that the mercy of heaven cannot be overruled by the laws of man. Creon's condemnation of Antigone leads to her suicide, to the suicide of her betrothed, Creon's son Haemon, and to the suicide of Creon's wife Eurydice, actions that may have sprung to Chambers's mind when he recalled his own attempted suicide and his ill-conceived notion that in taking his life he could expose the Communist conspiracy but avoid the personal destruction of Alger Hiss.

IN ADDITION to *Samson Agonistes* and *Antigone*, Chambers makes many exceptionally complex allusions to Shakespeare. The dominant references, not surprisingly, are to the histories and tragedies, especially to those

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concerned with treason and betrayal such as *Macbeth* and *Richard II*. The opening epigraph to *Witness* reproduces Horatio's lines from *Hamlet* requesting the ghost of Hamlet's father to reveal his foreknowledge of Denmark's fate. If Chambers is clearly like Hamlet both in his melancholy and in his brooding indecision about whether and how to accomplish his revenge against Hiss's treason, the several allusions to *Macbeth* give him an even more complicated character.

Once when reading *Macbeth* to his young son, Chambers tells us in the "Letter to My Children," he came to the passage in which Macbeth, having murdered Duncan, gazes at his bloody hands and asks if "all great Neptune's ocean" can wash them clean, or rather will his hands "The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/Making the green one red." As his son's body convulses at the terrifying question, Chambers gives "great silent thanks to God" for the faith that has been returned to him and which he hopes to pass on to his son's generation. Macbeth's rise to kingship—first through acts of treason and equivocation by others and then by his own treacherous "murder" of the kingdom's peace, which finally leaves him drenched in the blood of his comrades and friends—suggests the grim role assigned to those who commit treason on behalf of the Soviet Union. "I am in blood/Stepped in so far," Macbeth concludes, "that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er." Making the green sea "red" is Chambers's double pun for the crimes of his century, crimes in which all who acted on behalf of Stalin were necessarily involved.

Chambers may well have identified to a degree with Macbeth's guilt, but his role more clearly corresponds to that of Macduff, who watches as his country "sinks beneath the yoke" of bloody tyranny and who leads the force that overthrows Macbeth. (It is conceivable that Chambers even intended us to read his own difficult birth, in which he was "taken by instruments," as an echo of Macduff's, "from his mother's womb untimely ripped.") Indeed, it is the colloquy on treason and perjury between Macduff's wife and son that best explains both why Chambers felt compelled to testify and why he too felt deeply implicated in his antagonist's guilt:

> *Son.* Was my father a traitor, mother?
> *Wife.* Ay, that he was!
> *Son.* What is a traitor?
> *Wife.* Why, one that swears, and lies.
> *Son.* And be all traitors that do so?
> *Wife.* Everyone that does so is a traitor and must be hanged.
> *Son.* And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?
> *Wife.* Every one.
> *Son.* Who must hang them?
> *Wife.* Why, the honest men.
> *Son.* Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang them up.

If Macduff is a traitor, it is only to the bloody Macbeth, whose henchmen arrive immediately after this exchange to slaughter his wife and children; his final revenge against Macbeth mixes devotion to state *and* family. The scene thus highlights the importance of the family in Chambers's renunciation of the Stalinist bloodbath. It is Macduff who, upon seeing the slain Duncan, calls forth the king's sons to witness the horror, to look upon this "new Gorgon" of "murder and treason." Likewise, Chambers writes in *Witness* that in the Hiss case the "sneaky mass" of the "Gorgon head of the Communist conspiracy" was placed before Congress and the public.

More than heroic revenge is revealed in the parallel between Macduff and Chambers. For in (at first) withholding the documentary evidence of Hiss's espionage, Chambers too had been guilty of perjury, and he too had previously committed treason. This may explain the title of the final chapter of *Witness*, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow," echoing not Macduff but the doomed Macbeth in his most famous soliloquy. ("Out, out, brief candle!/Life's but a walking shadow . . . a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing.") Chambers's vision in the final pages of his life story is muted by fear for the future of the free world and sadness over his family's suffering. His garden is "now overgrown with weeds," and the spring weather of 1952 brings no healing to "a world grown older and colder," a world which will soon either "have borne a more terrible witness" or "will no longer exist." It is a conclusion in keeping with that of *Antigone*, or with the bleak resignation of Shakespeare's ruined king.

"COMMUNISM is never stronger than the failure of other faiths," Chambers wrote. Convinced that he had chosen the side not of victory but of defeat, he watched during the 1950's as anti-Communism briefly followed the path of wild excess and then lapsed into weakness. His central claim—that liberalism and Communism were the same—found fewer and fewer adherents, and the notion was soon anathema that belief in God had any place in political debate.

Chambers's vision may well be too austere to be universally accepted, but it is not too much to wish that his unhappy and tragic witness be recognized for the courageous act it was, or that his autobiography be judged one of the most remarkable philosophical and literary documents of our age. Out of a terrible life, Whittaker Chambers made a troubled but deeply moving testament of faith in freedom.

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The First Freedom

Peter L. Berger

In recent discussions of the place of religious liberty in the American polity, a number of people have argued that it is the first liberty, the foundation, the *fons et origo*, of all the other rights and liberties. I for one agree with this proposition, for the simple but overridingly important reason that the polity which recognizes religious liberty as a fundamental human right thereby recognizes (knowingly or unknowingly) the limits of political power.

It is easy enough to see why this should be so. At the core of the religious quest is the experience of transcendence, the encounter with a reality that is "totally other" than all the realities of ordinary life. And a necessary consequence of this encounter is that all the ordinary realities, including the most imposing and oppressive ones, are relativized.

Now, in the realm of human institutions, none is more imposing and (at least potentially) more oppressive than the polity, especially in its recent incarnation as the modern state with its historically unprecedented agglomeration of power. This agglomeration, of course, is manifested most terrifyingly in the modern totalitarian state, but all contemporary states, even the most democratic ones, possess instruments of power that would have made the most awesome tyrants of antiquity green with envy. (Think of what Genghis Khan could have done with radio communications, or the Emperor Caligula with an internal revenue service.) The state is very serious business indeed, *deadly* business—for in the end every state, even the most peaceful, rests on the power of the sword—and those who represent the state take themselves very seriously. That is why the state always wraps itself in religious or quasi-religious symbols, why it fosters solemn ceremonies, and why the refusal to be reverent toward it is everywhere a punishable offense (from *lèse-majesté* to contempt of Congress). Given all this, it should not surprise us that there is a built-in tension between all institutions of political power and the religious quest that tends toward relativizing them.

This has always been so. The holders of political power have always tried to contain the potentially subversive force of religion by controlling religious institutions. Most of the time they have been successful, but ever again there appear religious spokesmen—emissaries of transcendence, as it were—who have refused to play the role of legitimators of the political status quo. The power-holders naturally take a very dim view of these troublemakers and frequently enough employ very disagreeable methods to deal with them.

In the biblical tradition, the figure of the prophet most clearly embodies this religious challenge to the self-important seriousness of the rulers of this world—prototypically, in the confrontation between Nathan and King David. And this drama of speaking transcendent truth to worldly power has been reenacted many times in the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three great streams flowing out of the biblical experience. It should be stressed, though, that comparable relativizations of the polity have occurred in other traditions, as witness a long line of Hindu sages, Buddhist monks, and Confucian scholars. Indeed, all human religions are windows on the vastness of the transcendent: open any one of these windows, and the glitter of political power suddenly reveals itself to be a rather shabby affair.

In this quality of relativizing, unmasking, debunking the pretensions of human power we can see a deep, if rarely noted, affinity between the religious and the comic, between the prophet and the clown. The prophet proclaims that God laughs at all the kings and emperors of the earth; the clown makes a joke and reveals that the emperor has no clothes. No wonder, then, that tyrants are afraid both of prophecy and of jokes. No wonder that the tyrants of modern totalitarianism have been equally assiduous in controlling the institutions that (heaven forbid) may bring forth prophets and in persecuting anyone who has dared to make jokes about their grim agendas. Which explains why churches have become the last refuge of dissenters in all totalitarian societies, and why the same societies have produced a luxurious growth of underground humor.

Eastern Europe, I suppose, has been the most fertile ground for this kind of relativizing (and, in the deepest sense of the word, redeeming) humor.

Item: It is the year 2088. Two Czechs are standing on St. Wences-

Peter L. Berger *is University Professor at Boston University and the author of* Pyramids of Sacrifice *and* The Capitalist Revolution, *among other books.* *The present essay is adapted from remarks delivered last April at the National Symposium on the First Amendment Religion Clauses and American Public Life, sponsored by the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, and will be included in a forthcoming volume of conference papers.*

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las Square in Prague, in front of the Lumumba Monument. There is a long silence, and then one says to the other: "You know, it was better under the Chinese."

Item: A man walks into a state department store in Leipzig and asks for undershirts. The sales clerk tells him: "You have to go to the third floor. There they have no undershirts. On this floor we have no shirts."

Item: Question to a mythical Soviet radio station, Radio Erivan: "Is it not true that the Soviet government governs much better than did the czarist government?" Radio Erivan answers: "Yes, of course." Question: "Yet it seems that the czarist government was more popular. Why is that?" Answer: "Because it governed *less*."

When people laugh at such jokes in Prague or in Leningrad it is as if, for one joyful moment, the prison walls of the totalitarian society are breached, transcended, and a window opens to the fresh air of freedom. And *mutatis mutandis,* this is just what happens as people gather in barely tolerated churches and synagogues to worship a God Who is more powerful than all the tyrants of this world.

A believing Jew, or a believing Christian like myself, can put this insight into a theological proposition: redemption will finally be experienced as comic relief on a cosmic scale. Even now, in an as-yet-unredeemed world, redemption can be anticipated as a healing joke.

YET I feel certain that my view about the primacy of religious liberty in a catalogue of liberties would remain the same even in the unlikely event that I were to lose my faith and redefine myself as an agnostic. As an agnostic I would still be very reluctant to see human existence confined to the prison of ordinary reality; and even if I were now unable to make positive affirmations about the nature of that which transcends our ordinary lives, I would not want steel bars to be imposed on every window that might, conceivably, open up on unthought-of possibilities. In other words, there is a *secular* argument to be made for the primacy of religious liberty, as there are secular reasons for the democratic option against the totalitarian temptations of our age.

This points us toward a paradox which is particularly relevant to current debates over the meaning of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Without going into the constitutional and juridical ramifications of this issue, it seems to me that there is a depressing triviality about much that has been said about a "secular purpose" in this or that activity of religious institutions, including some things that have been said about it by the Supreme Court. (We need not dwell here on the remarkable spectacle of these nine characters, swaggering around in priestly robes in a building resembling a Greek temple and engaged in the endless exegesis of a sacred text—and then having the *chutzpah* to insist that there is no establishment of religion in America.)

To be sure, there is a "secular purpose" served if a church runs a soup kitchen, an orphanage, or even (though this is more doubtful) a university. But the most important "secular purpose" any church can serve is to remind people that there is a meaning to human existence that transcends all worldly agendas, that all human institutions (including the nation-state) are only relatively important, and that all worldly authority—even that of the Supreme Court of the United States—is disclosed as comically irrelevant in the perspective of transcendence.

Here, then, is the paradox: religious institutions serve their most important secular purpose precisely when they are least secular in their activities. Society, under certain circumstances, can easily dispense with church-operated soup kitchens or universities. But society can ill afford to lose the reminders of transcendence that the church provides every time it worships God. The protection of religious liberty serves the purpose of this ultimate anamnesis, which in itself protects the possibility of laughter and the wondrous mystery of the human condition.

But if these considerations apply clearly enough to tyrannies, what relevance do they have to democracies?

The modern state, for reasons rooted in its very structure, contains the impulse to expand into every nook and cranny of society. The totalitarian state is, of course, the apotheosis (I choose the word deliberately) of this impulse. Democracy, whatever its faults, provides the only halfway reliable institutional mechanisms to curb the totalitarian impulse. It does not do this because of its ideology: there have been cases of what J.L. Talmon called "totalitarian democracy," at least in the sphere of ideas (Jacobin in their original version), sometimes (even) in the sphere of facts. But the core of Western democracy, and certainly of the democratic experiment of the United States, is the institutionalization of limits on the power of government.

Thus, political scientists have defined democracy in different ways, but most come down to two key elements—regular elections and some sort of bill of rights. In other words, democracy seeks to ensure (not sporadically, but through predictable institutions) that the rascals can be thrown out from time to time, and that there are certain things that they cannot do while they are in.

It is because democracy—not as an idea, but as a functioning political reality—is based on such suspicion and such irreverence that it is the best shield against the totalitarian project, which demands faith and veneration. Any democratic constitution must say to the state, repetitively and insistently: "Thus far, and no farther!"

Every protection of political liberties and of human rights, of course, does just that. But the recognition of religious liberty, as a fundamental and irrevocable right, does it in a fundamental way. Religious liberty is not one of many benefits that the state may choose to bestow on its subjects. Rather, religious liberty is rooted in the very nature of man and, when the state recognizes it, the state thereby bows before a sovereignty that radically transcends every worldly

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manifestation of power. For the religious believer, this is the sovereignty of God; for the agnostic, it will be the sovereignty of that mystery within man that strives to go beyond the given—the mystery of human freedom.

THESE considerations have very practical implications for many of the controversies currently dividing American society. We have reason to be grateful that this society is democratically governed, that controversy is possible and indeed protected, and that by and large religious liberty is secure. However, it would be foolish to overlook the totalitarian tendencies even within this society, some of them very much present in issues touching on religious liberty. For one of the hallmarks of the totalitarian project is always the urge to drive underground the metaphysical propensity in man, to banish transcendence from the public square (except in the domesticated form of established or civil religion), and to make all of social life subject to the trivial world view of functional rationality. Put simply, the totalitarian project requires a world without windows; the defense of religious liberty is the counterproject of keeping open the windows on the wonder of our condition.

Which brings us to the issue of fundamentalism. Of course, one man's fundamentalism is another's self-evident truth. Depending on where one happens to live, the word may evoke Communist party officials trying to preserve Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, ayatollahs putting women behind veils, or born-again seminary trustees firing professors for not teaching that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

I happen to live two blocks from the Charles River, which separates Boston from Cambridge, Massachusetts. When *I* hear the word "fundamentalism," I think of my academic colleagues and neighbors whose unbending convictions and self-righteous intolerance of heretics are fully up to ayatollah standards (though, thank God, they lack ayatollah means of enforcement).

Perhaps we can be satisfied here with an ad-hoc definition of fundamentalism as any system of all-embracing belief held with rigid certitude and coupled with the moral assurance of one's right to impose it on everyone else. Fundamentalism thus understood, whatever its ideational content, will always be an enemy of religious liberty; always and everywhere, it can only flourish behind tightly shut windows; and wherever it sees an open window, it is under the urgent compulsion to slam it shut.

It is undoubtedly correct to say that, through most of human history, most fanaticism has been religious. This is a source of sorrow for any religious believer. It is a source of sorrow for me as a Christian who believes that not only is it possible to be religious without being fanatical, but that genuine religious faith *precludes* fanaticism.

In the contemporary world, too, sad to say, there has been a notable upsurge of religious fundamentalisms. The most dramatic cases are Islamic and Protestant fundamentalism, both enormously powerful forces cross-nationally and both (though there are important differences between them) capable of inspiring large numbers of people to make radical changes in their lives. Other religious traditions, however, have shown themselves capable of similar outbursts of unlovely and at times homicidal fanaticism: both Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; every sect of Islam and Christianity in Lebanon; Jewish fundamentalists in Israel; both Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka; Sikhs in the Punjab; and an odd assortment of syncretistic cults all across sub-Saharan Africa.

WHILE I cannot agree with those who regard Protestant fundamentalism in this country as constituting a comparable danger to pluralism and to civic peace, I would stipulate that there are situations in America too where religious liberty is threatened by religious fanaticism. (I would certainly think so if I were a seminary professor about to be fired for teaching modern methods of biblical scholarship, though, even in my distress, I would console myself with the knowledge that my persecutors cannot call upon the police to assist them.)

All the same, it seems to me that the most pervasive fundamentalisms facing us here in America are secular ones. Politically, they are both of the Left and the Right. But since we have heard so much in recent years about the latter, perhaps the time has come to focus on the former, which flourishes in the milieu of the new knowledge class in America.

In this milieu there is bemused contempt for the "superstitions" of religious fundamentalists, such as their belief that the Bible is literally inspired or that prayer can cause miracles. As a theologically liberal Lutheran, I must confess that I find the first proposition very improbable and that I am inclined to skepticism about any concrete specification of the second. Yet among the cultured despisers of Jerry Falwell and his cohorts it is widely believed that the Soviet Union has changed radically because it now has a leader with clothes that fit, that the establishment of racial quotas is a means toward a race-blind society, or that a six-month fetus should have a legal status roughly comparable to a wart.

Surely we have here "superstitions" greatly more dangerous than those found in the Protestant hinterland—more dangerous because it is the values and prejudices of the knowledge class, *not* those of the Reverend Falwell, that today shape important policies, are enacted into law, and define what is culturally acceptable. It is primarily against that class, and not against the subculture of conservative Protestantism, that religious liberty must be protected. For it is precisely the knowledge class which today seeks an "establishment of religion"—that is, the imposition through state power of its particular world view and morality—and which interferes with the "free exercise of religion" of those who disagree with its ideology.

THE social psychology of all fundamentalisms, religious or secular, holds no great enigmas. Its core

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motive is what Erich Fromm called the "escape from freedom"—the flight from the insecurities of being human into an illusory and necessarily intolerant certitude. In all likelihood this motive is age-old, but it takes on a special force under the circumstances of modernity. Indeed, there would seem to be a dialectical relation between the multiplication of choices brought about by modern pluralism and the flight into a once-and-for-all choice posited as an absolute.

The affirmation of religious liberty, by contrast, repudiates such illusory absolutes. It may take a believing or a skeptical form. The skeptical form will be a stoic acceptance of uncertainty; the believing form is based on the recognition that faith does not require false certitudes, that it can even live with doubt. The fanatic cannot laugh—an incapacity he shares with the totalitarian. Faith, on the other hand, opens up the possibility of laughter at the most profound level—the laughter that participates, by anticipation, in the joyful play of the angels.

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Books in Review

The Monster as Artist

PICASSO: CREATOR AND DESTROYER. By ARIANNA STASSINOPOULOS HUFFINGTON. *Simon & Schuster. 558 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by FERNANDA EBERSTADT

FEW books in recent years have provoked so unanimous a critical drubbing as Arianna Stassinopoulos Huffington's recent biography of Pablo Picasso. Art historians, Picasso specialists, even general-interest book reviewers all over the country joined forces to revile *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer* as the candied-prose "fluff" of a publicity hound equipped with the art expertise of a freshman and the psychological insight of a soap-opera heroine—and, simultaneously, as a hatchet job, "one-sided and hate-filled," "vengeful," and "strident."

Moreover, these critiques of a book faulted for lack of objectivity themselves often took on a curiously personal note. Mrs. Huffington, a Cambridge-educated Greek, is the author of four earlier works on culture and politics; she is also the recent wife of a Texas oil heir and a woman dedicated in her pursuit of fame, wealth, and social position. The latter attributes won her the mockery of (among others) *Time*'s art critic Robert Hughes, who in his review denounced not only her book but her "pearly teeth" and the $18,000 wedding dress that "capped her own social ascent in Reaganland."

This would seem, indeed, to be that rare case where critical opprobrium has succeeded in killing a book otherwise destined for best-sellerdom. Although each of the major early reviews ruefully predicted that Mrs. Huffington's biography, sold to television before its publication, would become a blockbuster, in fact *Picasso* hovered low on the charts for a mere four weeks or so before dropping from sight.

Whatever the merits or defects of this biography, the virulence with which it was greeted clearly had to do with its overall thesis. *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer* presents this modernist deity and one of the most famous figures of the 20th century as a grotesquely evil human being, and consequently, a deficient painter. In so doing, it raises questions, interesting in themselves, about the life which fueled and, in Mrs. Huffington's contention, disfigured and poisoned Picasso's work, about the nature of his reputation, and about the degree to which critics and audience must come to terms with an artist's often not-so-private disposition, conduct, and beliefs.

Born in Malaga in 1881 of a failed painter and an ambitious and worshipful mother, Picasso lived to be a feverishly prolific ninety-one. Throughout seventy-five years of astonishingly diverse and copious creativity, he proved himself a genius of gargantuan scale, ferocity, and dynamism. Reanimating Iberian, Mesopotamian, Greek, and African forms with his own brand of erotic disruptiveness, mathematical concentration, and at times serenity, Picasso invented a kind of art that was at once "primitive"—art as mask or idol averting evil, art as one's worst nightmare come true—and magnificently analytical. The result was a body of work that stands as one of the chief and also one of the most disturbing glories of our century.

In the process, Picasso paradoxically both broadened and domesticated art's domain. Not only is he arguably the greatest painter of the 20th century, he also made himself one of its most famous and familiar household gods—a small black-eyed bull whose figure, posing as boxer, as matador, or simply naked in the bath, ubiquitously graced the European and American press and whose barbed sayings, sometimes antic, sometimes sober and complex, were savored as modern gospel.

Indeed, as early as the 1930's Picasso came to be regarded by many not just as a painter of powerful and transfiguring genius, but as the social and political conscience of our time. In such canvases as *Guernica* (1937), which memorializes in emblems from Picasso's own private mythology the fascist bombing of a Basque town during the Spanish Civil War; in a poem-and-drawing sequence lampooning Franco, or the grisaille *The Charnel-House* (1945), which apparently depicts a Nazi concentration camp; in *Massacre in Korea* (1951), a vast sci-fi cartoon delineating an American "atrocity"; and in the interminable peace doves that bespatter his late work—as well as by his many statements against war and the forces of "reaction" and on behalf of oppressed humanity, and by his long and active service in the Communist party—Picasso's art at times took on a highly topical and political finish, while its maker became known as a standard-bearer of peace and artistic freedom in a world of occupying armies.

IN NOTHING was Picasso so fortunate as in his critics. The appreciations penned by such friends and early biographers as Pierre Daix and Ronald Penrose, by the photographer Brassai, and by Alfred Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, are remarkable for the rhapsodic reverence, sometimes cascading into sheer adulation, with which they regard not only Picasso the artist but Picasso the man. There were, of course, one or two dissenting views, most notably *Life with Picasso* (1965), the memoir by his long-time mistress, the painter Françoise Gilot. But this book, which depicts the artist as a perverse and often cruel man, and which Picasso unsuccessfully sued to have banned, was denounced by much of the art world as malicious

FERNANDA EBERSTADT, *whose articles and reviews appear regularly in these pages, is the author of a novel,* Low Tide.

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slander. A similar organized fury has greeted other efforts to qualify the master's reputation. And this is where Mrs. Huffington's biography comes in.

Picasso: Creator and Destroyer is governed by a three-part argument, which goes roughly as follows: First, in his private life and professional dealings Picasso was a monster of megalomania and sadism, a mean-spirited and malicious despot ruled by the compulsion to ravish, enslave, and destroy everything he touched, and animated by a kind of cosmic hatred that found its particular focus in his sexual loathing of women. Second, Picasso's painting, so clearly autobiographical, from his Cubist masterpieces to his last drawings, expresses a similarly systematic degradation of women. Lacking in that quality of redemptive humaneness which resides in all great and eternal creations, it is consequently barren, time-bound, and already dated. Finally, the reason Picasso has become such an icon of modernity is precisely that his brand of raging nihilism embodies the spirit of our age—a century characterized by massive destructiveness in the name of totalitarian ideologies. In short, Picasso, himself a perfect totalitarian, achieved his success and his significance because both his art and his life were "the 20th century's own autobiography."

THE man who emerges from *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer* is indeed a pattern of the tyrant. Moreover, he is a tyrant who puts all his gusto and finesse into bedeviling the sick, poor, weak, or the very young, and who grows increasingly petty, shameless, and depraved as his depredations and humiliations go unchallenged. Mrs. Huffington's catalog of Picasso's cruelties to colleagues, friends, mistresses, and children makes for dismal and ever more oppressive reading as, with age, the painter's character disintegrates and his targets become smaller and smaller.

Particularly hateful among Picasso's betrayals was his successful campaign of defamation against his friend, the Spanish painter Juan Gris. Among other tidbits, he talked Gertrude Stein out of giving money to the hungry Gris, and bullied Diaghilev into dismissing Gris, who was then dying, from a ballet he had been commissioned to design, and accepting instead sketches by Picasso that had been previously submitted for another Diaghilev production and rejected. More shadowy is the story of Picasso's refusal in 1944 to exert his considerable prestige with the Germans occupying Paris to free the poet Max Jacob, his long-time friend and acolyte, from the Nazi transit camp at Drancy. To a mutual friend who was raising a petition on Jacob's behalf, Picasso is said to have explained, "It's not worth doing anything at all. Max is a little devil. He doesn't need our help to escape from prison." (Jacob died there, awaiting transport to Auschwitz or Dachau.)

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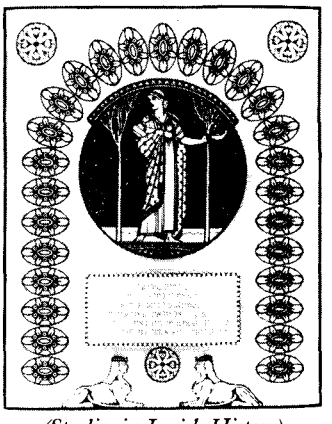

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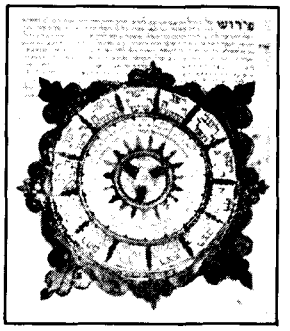

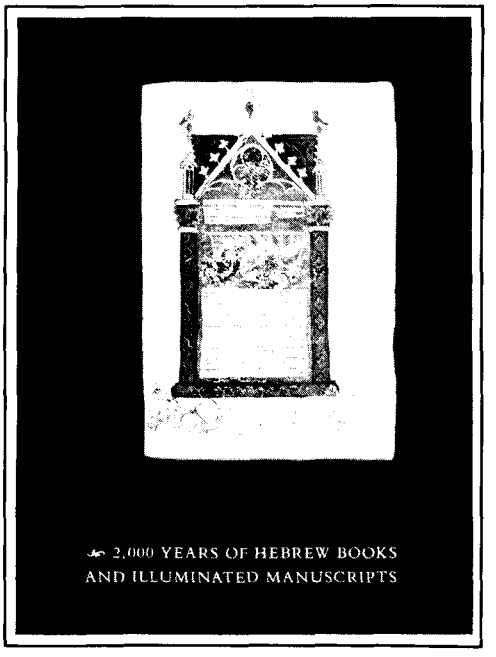

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Picasso's treatment of women and children is equally heart-sickening. A voracious womanizer who thrived on stirring up intrigue and inflicting pain, Picasso shamelessly played off his wives and girlfriends against each other, most famously describing as "one of my choicest memories" the day when Dora Maar and Marie-Thérèse Walter wrestled on the floor of the studio for his affections while he stood at his easel, painting. On family vacations Picasso would ensconce himself in a hotel with his current female companion, dog, parrot, monkey, children, and chauffeur, with a former wife and an alternate mistress installed in nearby lodgings, and would daily send off letters swearing undying love to a fourth woman, whose impassioned replies he would read to the lady-in-residence as an example of true love.

By Mrs. Huffington's account, Picasso regularly beat Dora Maar unconscious. When Françoise Gilot resisted moving in with him, he won her submission by pressing a lighted cigarette into her cheek. Nor did he deny himself more imaginative gestures of humiliation: while at a Communist "peace congress" in Wroclaw, he ordered his chauffeur to compose obviously working-class love-telegrams and send them in Picasso's name to the pregnant Gilot.

Picasso's schemes to drive his dependents crazy met with signal success: both Dora Maar, once a proud and talented painter and photographer, and his first wife, the Russian ballerina Olga Kokhlova, went mad, as did Marie-Thérèse Walter whom he had scooped up at the age of seventeen and kept on a lifelong string. When he died, Picasso correctly predicted a shipwreck in which many would go down: his grandson, whom, along with three of his four children, Picasso in the last years of his life had turned away at the door, swallowed a pint of chlorine bleach; his son Paolo soon followed with cirrhosis of the liver; Marie-Thérèse Walter hanged herself; and his second wife Jacqueline blew her brains out. (Françoise Gilot survived, and is today married to Dr. Jonas Salk.)

In stark contrast to his ungovernable viciousness in personal relations was Picasso's meekness as a Communist. He joined the party after the Spanish Civil War—many people otherwise sympathetic to Bolshevism were repelled by Stalin's betrayal of the Republicans in that conflict, but apparently not Picasso—and he remained an extremely active member through the Stalinist purges, through the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, through Khrushchev's secret speech revealing Stalin's crimes, and indeed to his dying day. "I am a Communist," he insisted, "and my painting is Communist painting."

Mrs. Huffington tellingly records the controversy over the portrait of Stalin which Picasso produced for the French Communist-party paper *L'Humanité* on the occasion of the dictator's death. This work provoked formal censure by the party leadership and many letters of protest from the rank-and-file as being insufficiently noble and "kindly." Louis Aragon, the poet who had commissioned the portrait, published a "self-criticism" thanking the party for its just rebuke. And from Picasso? Not a peep, either in defense of his work or in defense of artistic freedom. "I suppose it was the party's right to condemn me," he told reporters. This docility Mrs. Huffington ascribes to Picasso's frank admiration for power, in this case the power to dictate how artists might or might not paint.

Mrs. Huffington's portrait of the artist as tyrant is largely gleaned from Françoise Gilot, whose cause Mrs. Huffington champions but whose part in Picasso's life she replays with a melodramatizing crudeness quite foreign to the subtlety and good nature of Gilot's own *Life with Picasso*. In *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer*, indeed, we see too little of the avid curiosity and dogged discipline that make Picasso's life not just a cautionary tale but also an exemplar, or, most importantly, of the obsessive seriousness about art and its practitioners that marks the contradictory man presented by Gilot.

In her plentiful borrowings from Gilot's memoir, Mrs. Huffington often seems to lop off anecdotes precisely where the terrible dissolves into the comic, or to omit those passages—the larger part of the book—in which Picasso is seen delivering thoughtful, complex, and rather reverent disquisitions on painting and sculpture and their properties and effects, and analyzing the innovations and particular genius (and failings) of his predecessors and contemporaries.

On the subject of Chagall, for instance, Mrs. Huffington repeats Françoise Gilot's spicy anecdotes concerning the falling-out between the two painters, including a stormy dinner in which Picasso accused Chagall of not wanting to return to his native Russia because there was no money to be made there, and Chagall's later quip, "What a genius, that Picasso. It's a pity he doesn't paint." But Gilot also includes, and Mrs. Huffington omits, Picasso's more generous and interesting assessment of his former friend:

> When Matisse dies, Chagall will be the only painter left who understands what color really is. I'm not crazy about those cocks and asses and flying violinists and all the folklore, but his canvases are really painted, not just thrown together . . . there's never been anybody since Renoir who has the feeling for light that Chagall has.

Thus, although no one today can honestly argue that Picasso was other than a monster, and although none of Mrs. Huffington's critics has challenged the truth of any of her horror stories, even her portrait of him as a man ruled entirely by the passion for power needs to be qualified. Still, it is not this, but her riskier contention that Picasso's nastiness of spirit infected his painting, and from early on, which has aroused the greatest ire among the critics, who have derided her inability to separate the man from his work.

Here Mrs. Huffington has a point against her critics. For in Picasso's case the realms of private and public creativity have almost always been considered insepara-

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ble, including by his admirers, and perhaps most of all by the painter himself, who declared in 1935, "It's not what the artist *does* that counts but what he *is*. Cézanne would never have interested me a bit if he lived and thought like Jacques Émile Blanche [a society portraitist], even if the apple he painted had been ten times as beautiful." In a manifesto signed by forty prominent members of the art world demanding the banning of Françoise Gilot's *Life with Picasso*, the artist Edouard Pignon wrote, "In Picasso, there is no divorce between the man and the painter. It's of no use exalting the painter if one destroys the man. . . . Picasso's way of painting is a source of morality in itself." Or, to put it negatively, the artist did to the canvas what he did to his wives and children.

As commentators from Braque and Max Jacob to Hilton Kramer have in different ways observed, the particular impulse of this artist who declared painting to be "an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy" was a demonic assertion of power, which wreaked an agony of mutilation and woe on all he portrayed. His destructive rage was, moreover, distinctly sexual in its preoccupations, as can be seen not only in his increasingly malevolent portraits of women—at once dismembered and predatory, animals, demons, and machines, their howling mouths fitted with shark teeth, their bodies torpid, shriveled, robotic, or convulsed—but also in his crucifixions, bullfights, battlefields, his minotaurs, his bathers, his fishermen. These are canvases overridden by an unforgiving wrath, visited by a hideous conflagration from which no one may flee.

The rage intensifies with time. Picasso painted and drew prolifically until he died, and in his late work majesty deserts him: natural facility is joined to an erotic fury diseased in its jeering malevolence, "the eroticism," in Mrs. Huffington's words, "of the gaping crotch and the Peeping Tom."

It is Mrs. Huffington's contention that this existential "rejection of life and creation" which, according to her, lies at the heart of Picasso's work robs his painting of any claim to enduring greatness. But the trouble is that her book in no way earns its right to such a judgment. *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer* is dizzyingly indifferent to Picasso's working life, to the nature of his artistic endeavor, to the larger historical traditions and contemporary movements by which he was informed and which he both changed and enriched.

And as for the individual paintings, drawings, and sculptures that kept Picasso busy when he was not threatening to throw a recalcitrant mistress into the Seine or refusing to attend a friend's funeral, once Mrs. Huffington has identified a sitter, reiterated her litany ("misogynistic," "degrading") and quoted for back-up every passerby who ever uttered a mean word about Picasso's art, she has said all she seems to care to know. Such masterpieces as *Night Fishing in Antibes* (1939)—an oil-slick purple

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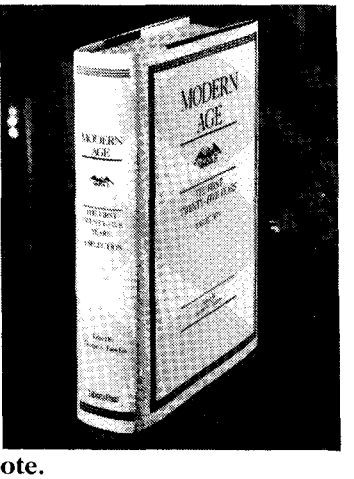

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and green dream vision of a marine *corrida*—go altogether unmentioned. In the end, one might apply to Mrs. Huffington herself Ronald Penrose's description of Marie-Thérèse Walter as a person so immune to Picasso's talents beyond the bedroom that she could greet him at lunch with, "Well, Pablo, what did you do this morning? I bet you've been painting again."

In Picasso, Mrs. Huffington asserts, the man is the art. Yet if one accepts this circular statement, there is no understanding *him* without attending to his painting. If Picasso's malignity deformed his work, it is equally true that his respect for his calling often acted beneficently upon his character, enabling him to enter into a rare and intimate communion with fellow-painters and, as we have seen in the case of Chagall, to appreciate disinterestedly the achievements of enemies or rivals. Thus, in the Cubist years, Picasso painted side by side and collaboratively with Braque, subsuming egotism in the task of exploring a territory so unearthly and unthought-of that, in Braque's enchanting description, "The things Picasso and I said to each other during these years will never be said again, and even if they were, no one would understand them anymore. It was like being two mountaineers roped together." In a strikingly similar formulation, Françoise Gilot records Matisse telling Picasso, "When one of us dies, there will be some things the other will never be able to talk of with anyone else." And on Matisse's death, Picasso, who had been irked and stung in life by the Frenchman's spiritual composure, remarked, "In the end, there is only Matisse."

Mrs. Huffington's final word on Picasso—that his genius was merely to have "mirrored the destruction of the most destructive of all centuries"—is as wrong about the genius as it is inadequate to the century. In her own book on Picasso, Gertrude Stein connects the painter to quite a different aspect of our century, namely, its scientific glories, comparing his vast, roiling, geometric vision of creation to the exhilarating sight of the outstretched, molded earth from the wings of an airplane. Once one has gazed down upon the world from the sky, its fields and towers never look the same again; for better or for worse, Picasso has had the same irreversible effect upon seen reality.

It is not, then, from *Picasso: Creator and Destroyer* that one will discover how this specimen of human vileness, who strikingly lacks the rent, anguished love of El Greco, the luminosity of Goya, the salubrious Orientalism and devotional gaiety of Matisse, the patience of Cézanne—any of those transcendent qualities that have for all time defined the greatest art—nonetheless squeaks in there by sheer magnitude of power, intensity of imagination, and fury of address.

Hollywood's Jews

AN EMPIRE OF THEIR OWN: HOW THE JEWS INVENTED HOLLYWOOD. By NEAL GABLER. *Crown. 560 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by
ANITA SUSAN GROSSMAN

THE overall thesis of this long, meandering book is that the immigrant Jews who started the American film industry had an outsider's yearning to become part of American society; that their films reflected an idealized version of America; and that these films, in turn, became so influential as to have defined American values. For Neal Gabler, then, the Jews of Hollywood, "by creating their idealized America on the screen, . . . reinvented the country in the image of their fiction"; they "colonized the American imagination." This paradox is hardly news to anyone who has thought about the rise of Hollywood, but it is buttressed here by hundreds of pages of biography of selected film moguls (Adolph Zukor, Carl Laemmle, William Fox, Louis B. Mayer, Jesse L. Lasky, Harry Cohn, the Warner brothers) and their studios.

ANITA SUSAN GROSSMAN *is a free-lance writer who lives in California.*

Ranging from town plans and views of Jerusalem to Hebrew maps published under Tsarist rule in Russia . . .

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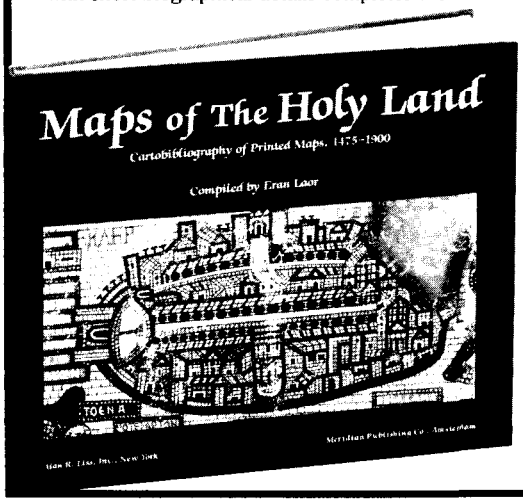

222 pages
24 full color plates
$77.50
ISBN 0-8451-1705-X
LC 86-15298
Size: 10½ × 12
Publication: December 1986

Alan R. Liss, Inc.
41 East 11th Street
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Meridian Publishing Co.
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Many of the early studio heads were self-made men who had ambivalent feelings, at best, about the Judaism in which they had been raised; it was associated with the hardships of their youth, a subject they preferred not to think about. Several, while attached to their mothers, resented their fathers as shiftless *luftmenshen* whose failure to make their way in the world was galling to their ambitious offspring. (Admittedly, though, few moguls were as bitter about their past as William Fox, who spat on the coffin at his father's funeral.) Then, too, as successful businessmen presiding over an industry of worldwide proportions, the studio heads saw no need to stress their Jewish identity. Far from it: just as they had recreated their own America in their films, they recreated (or, in Gabler's unfortunate term, "aestheticized") their lives; for many, the process involved divorcing their Jewish spouses to marry younger, Gentile women.

Still, to their credit, as Gabler notes, the moguls were not just money-grubbing philistines. Not only did they sincerely believe in the films they made, but they themselves were the creative powers behind those films. Louis B. Mayer, semi-literate though he may have been, ultimately guided MGM in the type of movie it made for decades. Harry Cohn, often portrayed as a monster of egotism and predatory sexual behavior, was also a brilliant executive who, on a fraction of MGM's budget, moved Columbia Pictures up from poverty row into the front rank.

Although the Hollywood history Gabler presents is more or less familiar, an interesting exception is his chapter, "Rabbi to the Stars," which focuses on three prominent figures in the Hollywood Jewish community: Rabbis Edgar Magnin and Max Nussbaum, and the lawyer Mendel Silberberg.

The two rabbis offer a curious contrast in style. Magnin, California-born, represented assimilation and smooth worldliness; both were fittingly served by his huge Wilshire Boulevard Temple, modeled on the Pantheon and seating 1,500 people. An intimate of Louis B. Mayer and a consummate perform-

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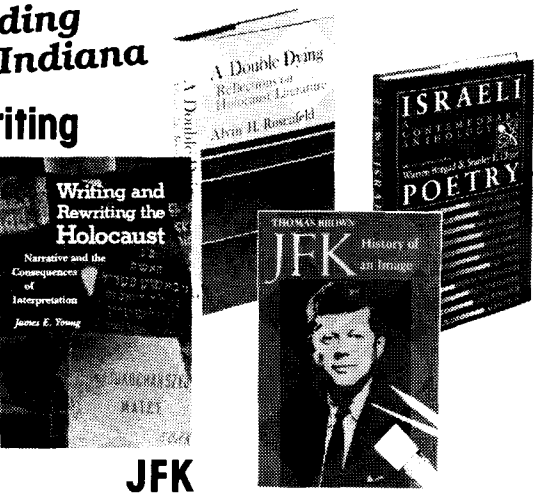

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er in the pulpit, Magnin had no time for counseling individual members of his congregation, whom he reportedly dismissed with, "I'm your rabbi, not Dear Abby. Don't bother me," or words to that effect.

Magnin's reign was eventually challenged by the more intense and charismatic Max Nussbaum, a Berlin rabbi who fled the Nazis to preside over Temple Israel and its glamorous congregation, including such converts as Elizabeth Taylor Fisher and Mr. and Mrs. Sammy Davis, Jr. More conservative in religious outlook and more of an activist in social issues, Nussbaum became enough of a celebrity in his own right to be the subject of a 1958 *This Is Your Life* television program.

As for Mendel Silberberg, he was a studio lawyer *par excellence*, a power in Los Angeles political circles, and, as chairman of the Community Relations Council, a kind of ambassador-at-large of the Hollywood Jewish community. Silberberg had been raised as a Christian Scientist, and perhaps it was this, opines Gabler, that made him so attractive as a Jewish emissary: "A rather tenuous Jew himself, he was extremely sensitive to the image of the Jew among Gentiles. . . . He was also articulate, cultured, magnetic, intelligent, rich, and powerful, which was exactly how the Hollywood Jews wanted to be represented to the Gentiles." Assimilation, after all, was the name of the game: Jesse Lasky and his wife dabbled in spiritualism, Christian Science, and automatic writing to replace the Judaism that the family had abandoned; Harry Cohn was known for going to work at the studio on Yom Kippur—although he made the one concession of not taking telephone calls; Louis B. Mayer chose a Catholic woman as his second wife, cultivated the friendship of Cardinal Spellman, and was, in his daughter's words, "very Catholic prone."

Yet however much the studio heads strove to distance themselves from their origins, events in the 1930's and 40's forcibly reminded them of their identity. The moguls responded with large-scale fund-raising for Jewish causes. Some, like Universal Pictures' Carl Laemmle, went further: with the same extended sense of kinship which had made his studio notorious for nepotism, "Uncle Carl" arranged in the late 1930's for the emigration from his native town in Germany of not only his sister and brother-in-law but of virtually every Jew who wished to leave—about 250 people in all.

Hollywood's Jews were more or less spectators to the tragedy of the war years, but the heating up of the cold war brought more direct threats to the moguls' hard-won power and status. Members of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) included anti-Semites who made no bones about the connection in their minds between Jews and Communists. As Gabler notes, the industry was in an embarrassing dilemma, for although the moguls themselves were strongly conservative—and most of them Republican party stalwarts—in general Hollywood Jews were greatly "overrepresented" in the Communist party and on the Left as a whole. Of the original nineteen Hollywood witnesses called up to testify before the Committee, thirteen were Jewish; and of the "Hollywood Ten" cited for contempt of Congress, six were Jews.

UNFORTUNATELY, Gabler's account of the HUAC investigations and the Hollywood blacklist demonstrates the chief weakness of his book as a whole. In situations demanding summary, interpretation, and analysis, too often we get only a welter of confusing detail, and opinions trivialized by the gushy prose in which they are expressed. Thus we learn that the moguls initiated the blacklist to "save themselves from the wrath of the anti-Semites" by throwing their employees to the wolves; but as to the world events causing the national mood of panic that allowed HUAC to flourish, Gabler offers no insight or explanation. In the absence of any larger perspective, his account of Hollywood during the McCarthy period seems partial and incomplete.

Gabler is similarly unclear as to why the moguls capitulated: was there any truth to the claim that the studios' New York offices had demanded the blacklist because without it their films would be boycotted by right-wing groups? Gabler quotes, with apparent agreement, one witness's assertion that such a threat was empty and that the producers' fears were utterly baseless, but then reverses himself to remark that "everyone knew that the American Legion had been applying enormous pressure on the New York executives." Finally, in yet another shift of opinion, he states that "the idea of a New York bogeyman was too pat an explanation."

Conclusion? None. All we are left with is the general notion that the blacklist years marked the end of the American dream for Hollywood's Jews: those "who tried appeasing Hollywood's tormentors only demonstrated their tormen-

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(Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code) Date of Filing: October 1, 1988. Title of Publication: Commentary. Frequency of Issue: Monthly. Location of Known Office of Publication: 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Publisher: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Editor: Norman Podhoretz, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Managing Editor: Marion Magid, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Owner: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 (non-profit membership corporation incorporated by legislature of the State of New York). Known Bond-Holders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. For completion by Non-profit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: The purpose, function, and non-profit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months. Extent and Nature of Circulation: A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 37,766. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 37,604. B. Paid Circulation: 1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 3,349. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 3,261. 2. Mail Subscriptions: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 32,823. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 32,659. C. Total Paid Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 36,172. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 35,920. D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier, or Other Means: Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 119. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 107. E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 36,291. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 36,027. F. Copies Not Distributed: 1. Office Use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 864. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 820. 2. Returns From News Agents: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 611. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 757. G. Total (Sum of E and F): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 37,766. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 37,604. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Bruce Lodi, Production Manager.

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tors' strength and the Jews' weakness. Paradise was lost. It would never be regained."

By its narrative chronology, *An Empire of Their Own* implies a strong causal connection between the rise of HUAC and the decline of the studio system. Yet if paradise was indeed lost in the late 1940's, it was probably because of far more prosaic economic factors: the advent of television, the rise of the independent producers, and, most importantly, a Supreme Court antitrust case that ultimately led the studios to divest themselves of their theater chains and exhibition rights. None of this merits more than a single sentence in the text and a footnote in Gabler's book.

An Empire of Their Own is thus a disappointing work, containing but failing to integrate the raw material for several different essays not necessarily related to one another. For long stretches the "Jewish" theme is subordinated to straight studio history and biography, subjects that have been more lucidly treated elsewhere. Even the anecdotes Gabler recounts are more entertainingly presented in such recent books as Irene Mayer Selznick's *A Private View* and Otto Friedrich's *City of Nets: A Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940's*. Finally, one misses a full discussion of the films themselves in terms of their Jewish content (or lack of it). It is a pity that so much research has yielded so little insight into what we already know of Hollywood's past.

Reviving the 60's

MAKING HISTORY: THE AMERICAN LEFT AND THE AMERICAN MIND. By RICHARD FLACKS. *Columbia University Press. 376 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by HARVEY KLEHR

So far, the 1980's have not been the best of times for radicals. All around the world, collectivist ideologies have been discredited, and left-wing governments and parties are in retreat. Even Communist regimes have begun experimenting with free markets. As Ronald Reagan's presidency draws to a close, however, some radical hearts in America have begun to beat faster. Convinced that the past eight years have been an aberration, perhaps the result of a collective brainwashing of the American public by an insidious power elite, the American Left is unpacking its old clichés in anticipation of new opportunities.

Richard Flacks, an early leader of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), now a sociologist at the University of California at Santa Barbara, remains committed to the language and concepts of the early 1960's. Still entranced by the vision of participatory democracy that SDS eschewed as it marched determinedly down the path of Marxism-Leninism, Flacks hardly notices the 1980's. True to his New Left vision, he asserts that "there can be little doubt that 'alienating work' is a fundamental feature of the lives of vast numbers of Americans." Although the Reagan administration did orchestrate a "mild economic recovery" to coincide with the 1984 election, otherwise it has only reduced living standards for most Americans while providing such special benefits to better-off citizens as "reduced inflation, lower taxes, public deregulation." The abundance of the American economic system has been a useful tool for American elites, offering them "the wherewithal to concede very substantial benefits for some, so that the exclusion and repression of others would be tolerated by the class as a whole."

Still, although he remains emotionally committed to radical fantasies, Flacks understands that making them the centerpiece of a

HARVEY KLEHR *is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Politics at Emory University. His latest book is* Far Left of Center: The American Radical Left Today *(Transaction Books).*

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Left agenda invites continued political irrelevance. By any objective criterion the radical Left in the United States has failed. Left-wing parties and movements have never been able to convince a significant segment of the American people that their work is alienating or that their economic and political systems are tools of oppression. Most Americans, moreover, evince far greater concern with their daily lives than they do with public affairs. To Flacks, therefore, the task for radicals is to overcome the separation between those daily lives and "making history," by which he means those activities "that have the effect of changing one or more features of the patterned everyday ways of life characteristic of a community."

ALTHOUGH the ultimate goal is socialism, democracy prepares the way. People, writes Flacks, have to be given the ability to control their own lives, to participate fully in decisions that affect them. In doing so they can avail themselves of the time-honored American tradition of civic participation (honored, according to Flacks, more in the breach than in the observance), which provides theoretical support for this agenda. Flacks makes it clear, however, that self-centered behavior will not be acceptable, and that in their civic lives individuals will have to "learn to take account of social welfare and the social future. . . ."

Through a review of the history of American radicalism, Flacks discovers that, in fact, regardless of what national organizations like the Communist and Socialist parties may have thought they were doing or saying, local activists and organizers have all along been empowering people, helping them to fend off assaults on their lives from corporations or the state, providing visions of a new life to which to aspire.

The "tradition of the Left" that Flacks identifies with democracy is extraordinarily inclusive. In its ranks are radical democracy, populism, socialism, Communism, syndicalism, anarcho-Communism, and pacifism. The "tradition of the Left" does not, however, include the dominant ideological framework of the United States, "which has often called itself democratic" but is not.

To some it might appear that many of the tendencies Flacks cites have not been known for their devotion to democracy, let alone to participatory democracy, but Flacks maintains otherwise: *all* leftists, no matter how identified they may be with support for planning, centralized control of the economy, or totalitarian regimes hostile to individual freedom, have been committed to a vision of full democracy. As for conservatives, who after all have frequently led the opposition to centralization, planning, and technocratic goals, Flacks has only scorn for them and their ideas. While leftists are driven by ideals, conservatives are crassly self-interested:

> To a great extent, right-wing ideologies are modes of thought designed not to spur action or to enhance collective responsibility, but to provide a moral justification for egocentricity. . . . Insofar as political commitment requires qualities of self-sacrifice or a capacity to find personal fulfillment through social participation, such personal qualities do not resonate well with right-wing ideological perspectives.

By such simple and dishonest rhetorical devices, Flacks can dismiss opponents without addressing their arguments.

FLACKS is not too dismayed by the absence today of a single mass left-wing party. His new Left is developing in other ways—through grass-roots local organizations working in the areas of peace, the environment, feminism, labor, alternative media, cooperatives, culture, consumer rights, tenant rights, minority rights, gay rights, the ACLU, and the reform Democratic movement. It is extended in regional groups like ACORN and Ralph Nader's Public Interest Research Groups. It communicates via the *Nation*, *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*, and *Dissent*, and relies on such think-tanks as the Institute for Policy Studies. As these organizations spread, the Left is overcoming its isolation from mainstream America; its advance is similarly aided by the Left's deepening entrenchment in academia, where its influence is felt on the "dominant outlooks of the social sciences and humanities."

For Flacks, a major advantage of such forms of localized and single-issue radicalism is that "one can more easily be a Marxist in the morning, a pacifist in the evening, while going to church on Sunday and voting Democratic on election day." This theoretical eclecticism—or incoherence—is allegedly both inevitable and desirable. Flacks does not want radicals to "assert leadership over people or compete for their allegiance, or [try] to convert them to an alternative belief system"; such behavior would be a symptom of elitism. Instead, he advocates informal and continued resistance to authority, disseminating information (perhaps on videocassettes) on the "arts of everyday resistance," demanding a say in workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. He perceives *every* individual act of resistance to conventional role expectations as political, marking a small victory for the Left. Thus, he applauds for their "historical meaning" such acts of "nonconformity" as recycling paper, refusing to buy chemically adulterated food, conserving energy, and reducing the use of a car.

IN sum, the years since the collapse of the New Left have taught Flacks little, either about American society or about the Left. He retains the same scorn for the achievements of American society and democracy that first characterized SDS. He still sees no enemies on the Left. He remains unconcerned about the theoretical and practical links between free-market economies and democratic societies. He is silent on the question of whether some areas of social life might be inappropriate arenas for democratic decision-making.

And, finally, neither the errors nor the barbarities of the Left have taught Flacks any humility. With the same smug self-assurance that characterized the generation of the

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1960's, he grandly proclaims that "the Left is the conscience of the constituted political culture." Here we go again.

After the Fall

ADAM, EVE, AND THE SERPENT. By ELAINE PAGELS. *Random House. 189 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID KLINGHOFFER

ELAINE PAGELS has devoted much of her career as a scholar of religion to a single proposition: that formative Christianity developed the way it did not because its doctrines best represented religious truth, but because those doctrines were the most expedient to the growing institutionalization of the Church. In *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979), her first book to receive wide popular attention, Mrs. Pagels argued that the defeat of gnostic Christianity at the hands of orthodoxy resulted from the fact that orthodox ideas—for example, that Christ's resurrection was a historical event and not merely a spiritual symbol—served the aims of those determined to build an empire-spanning institution out of a dispersed and unruly collection of sects and congregations.

In *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent,* Mrs. Pagels's latest book, the point is essentially the same. Classical Christian ideas concerning the inherent sinfulness of sexual desire, the irremediable moral depravity of mankind, and the relationship between human guilt and human suffering, all developed at a specific time in history. These new ideas were radical departures from the beliefs of earlier Christians. And they took hold in the Church because they were institutionally more convenient than their predecessors.

What Mrs. Pagels is after, in other words, is the politics of religious ideas and attitudes, and she has an avowedly contemporary motive for her investigations. "Abrupt changes in social attitudes," she notes in her introduction with implicit approval, "have recently become commonplace, especially with respect to sexuality." How, she wonders, did "traditional patterns of gender and sexual relationship" develop in the first place? This book is her attempt to get at an answer through the history of early Christian views on human nature (other influences on "traditional patterns of gender and sexual relationship," such as the Greek and the Jewish, are effectively excluded).

As Mrs. Pagels tells the story, before the year 312, when the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the Jesus movement limped along as a weak and persecuted sect. As a kind of shield against the uncertainty of their daily lives, the earliest Christians believed, as Jesus had promised, that the Kingdom of God was very near at hand—that many of them "would not taste death before they had seen the Kingdom of God." Accordingly, they set about packing their moral bags—most notably by adopting a life of severe austerity, particularly sexual austerity. While finding nothing inherently sinful in marriage or sexual intercourse, they regarded these practices as clear impediments to a single-minded devotion to God and His kingdom.

Meanwhile, these first Christians engaged in a kind of spiritual rebellion against their Roman oppressors by declaring, unilaterally, their own freedom from Roman rule. Because no man, even an emperor, could justly rule over any other, Christians therefore had no worldly political obligations—no obligations, for example, to sacrifice to the Roman gods: "Our refusal [to sacrifice] is not an admission of fear," declared the African Minucius Felix, "but an assertion of our true liberty!" The right to defy the Roman empire, Christians believed, rested on the principle of moral freedom deriving ultimately from Genesis 1-3, the story of Adam and Eve: like Adam, Christians could choose between good and evil.

DAVID KLINGHOFFER, *a new contributor, is assistant book editor at* National Review.

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THE consensus on these issues was shattered during the 4th century by Augustine, bishop of Hippo. Having embraced in his maturity a Christianity different in many ways from the faith of the early apologists, Augustine came to reject, most famously, the orthodox belief in moral freedom. According to Augustine, Adam fell for the sin of having rebelled against God's authority, and all mankind thereby lost the freedom to act on its own will. For Augustine, the emblem of man's moral enslavement was his inability to keep his "disobedient members," his sexual organs, in check: sexual desire was not merely impractical, as it was for Augustine's forebears, but symbolic of moral degradation. Furthermore, as Augustine argued in *City of God*, with the loss of the ability to choose good over evil man had also necessarily forfeited the right to self-government; human society, owing to its inherent depravity, required order, authority, control from above.

By the end of the 5th century, Augustine's decidedly unorthodox vision had come to represent orthodoxy, while that of the Church's earlier apologists was approaching the boundaries of heresy. Why? Citing Michel Foucault's notion of "the politics of truth," Mrs. Pagels argues that Augustine's theology prevailed because it better explained to ordinary Christians the difficulties and contradictions they encountered living under a very imperfect Christian empire and worshipping in a vast, state-sponsored Church. Unwittingly, orthodoxy became a co-conspirator in Christian Rome's efforts to keep its Christian subjects happy. As Mrs. Pagels puts it, "Augustine's theory of original sin could make theologically intelligible not only the state's imperfections but the Church's imperfections as well." If even a baptized Christian could never erase the stain of Adam's sin, it was no surprise that the emperor and the bishop of Rome himself hardly seemed model agents of God. On similar grounds, Augustine's acceptance of human government as a necessary evil helped Christians understand the Church's willingness to use its growing power to persecute heretics.

A GREAT deal of evidence has gone into this slim book, along with some well-supported speculation. Provocative as it is, however, much of Mrs. Pagels's argument has been heard before. Her lengthy discussion of Christian asceticism as it developed in 3rd- and 4th-century Egypt, for example, will be familiar to readers of Peter Brown's marvelous *The Making of Late Antiquity*. In general terms, her historical scheme of Christianity's evolution—theological purity and adherence to Christ's message, followed by decline and growing neglect of Christ's message, followed in turn by the rise of the Roman Catholic Church—is straight out of the traditional Protestant version of the Church's early history.

Likewise, Mrs. Pagels's genealogical approach has its own, rather distinguished family tree. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche attempted to discredit what he considered the Christian morality of weakness and resentment by exposing its roots. Analogously, Mrs. Pagels subtly discredits Augustinian Christianity by exposing *its* roots—by proving that, in important ways, what has become modern Western Christianity represents a rejection of earliest Christianity, the Christianity closest, presumably, to the faith Jesus taught.

No doubt Mrs. Pagels, as a historian, would object that *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* has no polemical strategy, no axe to grind. If she spends two hundred pages showing how Christianity abandoned many of its original doctrines, that does not necessarily mean that she believes Christianity has fallen, only that it has *changed*. In her epilogue, indeed, Mrs. Pagels protests that she most definitely does not prefer pre-Augustinian Christianity to post-Augustinian Christianity. In William James's formulation, she claims to offer only an "existential judgment," a judgment of a historical phenomenon's importance or meaning and not a "spiritual judgment," that is, a judgment of value.

Unfortunately, Elaine Pagels the polemicist gives Elaine Pagels the historian away. Her language, for one thing, is transparent. Repeatedly she notes her "astonishment" at the willingness of the early Church to embrace Augustinian theology. "Why," she wonders, "did Catholic Christianity adopt Augustine's paradoxical—some would say preposterous—views?" Her epilogue notwithstanding, Mrs. Pagels makes little attempt throughout the book to hide her

"Governor, you're no Lloyd Bentsen."

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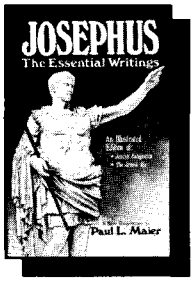

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distaste for much of Augustinian Christianity. Her discomfort with Augustine's attitude toward women, and specifically his belief that "a husband is meant to rule over his wife as the spirit rules the flesh," is severe. She has much pleasanter things to say about Augustine's great opponent Julian, the Pelagian "heretic," who conceded that "male domination, like labor pain, while originating in God's 'good' creation, may become, through sin, both painful and oppressive." She also roots enthusiastically for the "liberal, urbane, and sophisticated" Clement, who, unlike the anti-egalitarian Augustine, declared that "divinity now 'pervades all humankind equally . . . deifying humanity,' the slave equally with the master." In Mrs. Pagels's hands, the early apologists sound suspiciously modern, like so many disciples of William Sloane Coffin.

Mrs. Pagels concludes that "even his admirers would do well to reassess and qualify Augustine's singular dominance in much of Western Christian history." Unfortunately, knowing that Augustine was less liberal than his predecessors helps us little in forming a spiritual judgment of the Christianity he left behind—unless we happen to think, as Mrs. Pagels seems to do, that religious ideas lose some or all of their validity once they can be shown to have a human genealogy.

Toward the Good Life

IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT. By CHARLES MURRAY. *Simon & Schuster. 301 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

THIS deeply thoughtful book by the author of *Losing Ground* (1984) recalls the boldness of the early 80's, a time when it seemed as if the very assumptions underlying much of domestic policy were ripe for reconsideration. Unfortunately, the election campaign we have just passed through, between candidates both of whose grand policy designs amounted to undiluted incrementalism, was practically silent on the fundamental matters Murray addresses: the essential elements of a good life in a free society, the proper role of government, the subtle relationships between public and private, between governmental and voluntary, between community and state. But this makes *In Pursuit of Happiness* all the more valuable, for to read it is to be reminded of the difference between what is basic and what is superficial in deliberations about public policy.

Murray's careful spadework reveals wide cracks in the conceptual foundations of the policy edifice. Among analysts and policy-makers alike he finds a profound misunderstanding of human motivation and behavior, acute memory loss with respect to the Founders' conception of the scope of government, and lazy intellectual habits that yield grave errors in analysis, program design, and evaluation. His book is full of well-wrought "thought experiments," telling reappraisals of conventional wisdom, and dazzling ratiocination. No summary is apt to do it justice, but these points are indispensable:

• In an affluent society the minimal material needs of food and clothing are readily met, and once met, turn out to have little to do with happiness, defined by Murray as "lasting and justified satisfaction with one's life as a whole." Thus, it is not the distribution of goods and wealth but rather the pursuit of happiness in this larger sense that constitutes the only fit standard by which to gauge success in the design of social policy. The question to be asked of governmental actions, real or contemplated, is whether they are likely to foster or to inhibit the conditions for pursuing happiness.

CHESTER E. FINN, JR., *who served (1985-88) as Assistant Secretary of Education, is professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University and director of the Educational Excellence Network.*

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• The proper unit of study in appraising a policy or program is the individual, not the collectivity.

• The most that government can reasonably undertake to do is to "maximize the ability of each person to put himself in a situation satisfactory to his own needs," one in which he is enabled to take the actions that will afford him happiness. But "'enable' is as far as the government can go," for it is people, not governments, who pursue happiness, and who decide when they have achieved it.

• The wisest and most effective public policies are those that remove obstacles to the exercise by individuals, communities, and "little platoons" (Murray here borrowing from Burke) of their own instincts and impulses to order their affairs in ways that foster the pursuit of happiness. So long as governments prevent violence and coercion, people can be counted upon to do most of the rest. An overactive government removes the natural incentive to provide for oneself and one's neighbors, and it often fails to achieve the fundamental objective of policy.

AN EXAMPLE Murray probes at extended length and considerable depth is the goal of getting better teachers into American schools. He accurately states the "conventional paradigm": to attract more able people into the profession, we should have more rigorous entry standards, and we should give teachers higher pay, greater status, better working conditions, and greater professional autonomy. Murray insists that such a program, if enacted, will not work. Though "the failure will not be immediately apparent," in a few years "the teachers will be no better and may actually be worse."

The reason is that for a policy like this to succeed, individuals will have to take actions they oppose and submit to practices which go against their interests. If, for example, we actually mean to weed out "incompetents," standards of teacher certification will have to be set so high that some competent teachers will inevitably be excluded as well. For this reason, teachers and their unions will offer intense and ultimately successful resistance to high standards—and, Murray acknowledges, reasonable people will think this justified.

Giving teachers greater autonomy will likewise fail, Murray predicts, because it cannot but weaken the authority of principals to manage their schools. Even so obvious a nostrum as higher salaries will not, he forecasts (with somewhat less plausibility), boost teacher quality, because the kinds of increases we might realistically expect—$5,000 to $10,000 a year—will "make it only slightly less sacrificial for the talented to be teachers, but much more attractive for the second-rate to become teachers." Besides, "we've raised teachers' salaries for years without getting better teachers."

The alternative Murray offers for solving this and other vexing school-related problems is a radical decentralization of the education enterprise. Let a hundred parents get together and determine the kind of education they want for their children, the kinds of teachers they want to provide that education, and the amount of money (together with other incentives, rewards, and conditions) they will need to furnish in order to obtain such teachers. Remove all constraints as to whom they can hire. Expect them to deploy only such resources as they can muster. And let them establish the sort of school they favor. This will succeed, Murray says, because such a policy lowers barriers to doing what people care about and are naturally disposed to do: "Give parents control over the education of their children . . . and you will unleash enormous energy and imagination, all tending toward the excellent end of educated children."

A bold—nay, radical—idea, and hence sure to be dismissed as "naive" or "politically unrealistic." Murray acknowledges that narrower and more conventional policy goals can be pursued through less sweeping means; if, for example, the objective is only to produce high-school graduates who know more math or science, there are myriad ways to accomplish this by souping-up the present school system. But insofar as our goal is the "pursuit of happiness" by people "in all classes and in all occupations," he insists that in education, as in other areas of social policy, arrangements must foster the exercise of peoples' own best instincts and private predilections.

THE formulation is surely sound, and it is engagingly argued throughout this important book. Yet Murray does miss a few beats, most gravely in his seeming obliviousness to state government and to the key role it plays in many social-policy domains—including, especially, education. The political model Murray constructs seems to consist on the one hand of the federal government and on the other hand of individuals, voluntary associations, and small communities. Yet in education, law enforcement, and various other social-policy settings, the central players in recent years have been governors and legislators. They bear the constitutional responsibility for these matters. And a number of them have had greater success in their endeavors than Charles Murray may realize.

How odd, to use one of Murray's favorite phrases, that so insightful a book by a first-rate political thinker, intent on recapturing the federalist principles of the Founding Fathers, should be virtually silent on one of the more remarkable governmental developments of the decade.

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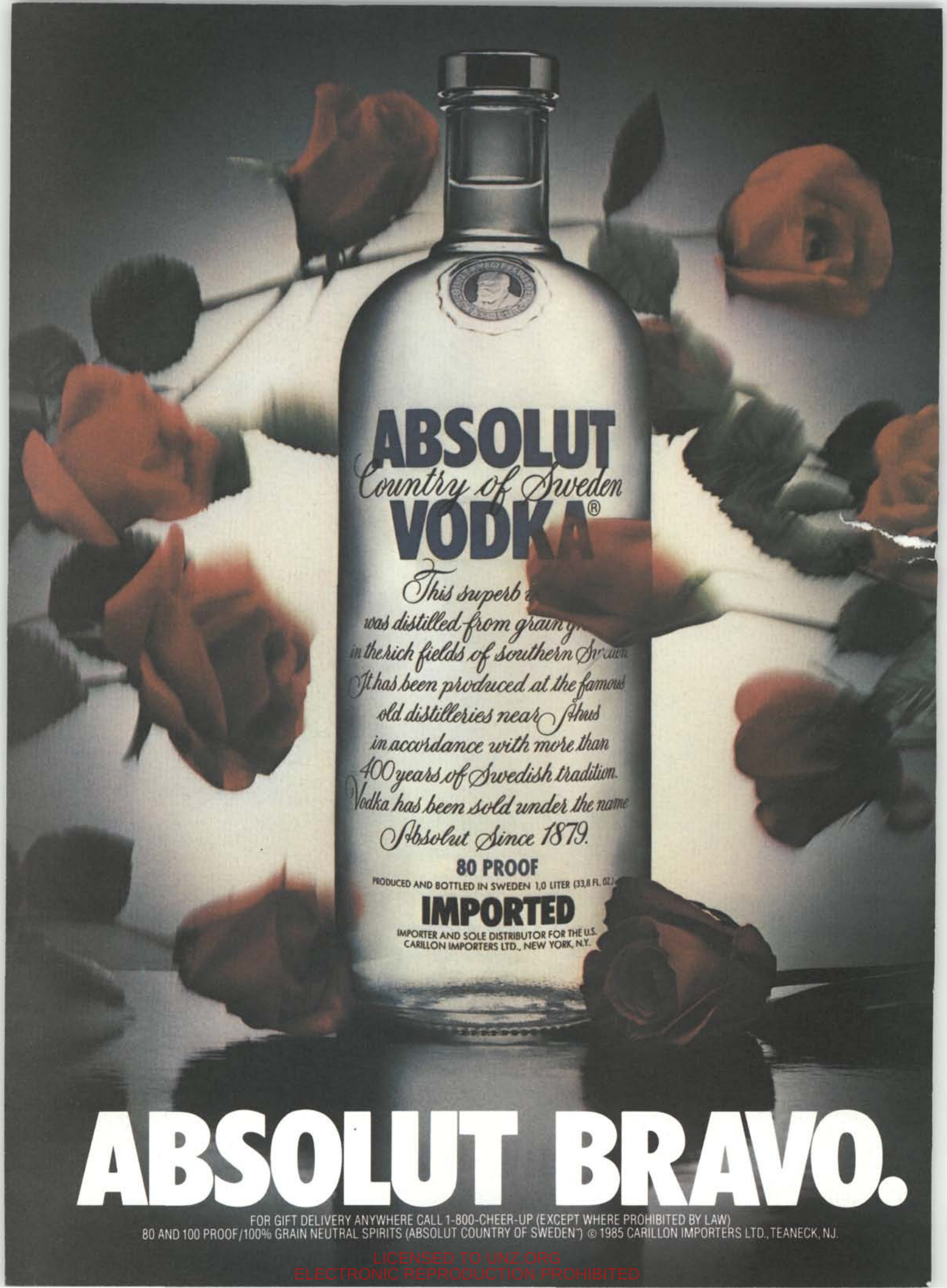

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